Entertainment/C1
Phillip's ex 'blinded by love'

■ Lifestyle/E1
Beyond the spread of 'banig'

■ Across/A18
Tragedy strikes Kidlat's house

■ Metro/A24
A clinic for little angels

■ Sports/A28
No contest in NBA slam dunk

American troops back for war exercises

By Allan Macatuno and Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—At least 700 American troops, including 100 Marines bound for Palawan, arrived here on Sunday, a week before the Feb. 23 opening of the large-scale

AMERICAN/A10

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Inquirer now costs P18

FOR THE past three years, the Philippine Daily Inquirer has carried out various cost-cutting measures to keep the cover price steady at P15. During this period, however, the peso has sharply depreciated by as much as 25 percent, jacking up production costs, particularly of imported paper.

So that PDI can continue to deliver the same quality newspaper to readers, the company has decided to raise the INQUIRER cover price to P18 starting today. Issues from Monday to Sunday will have the same cover price.

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Monday, February 16, 2004 ★★ 64 pages / 6 sections / vol. 19 / no. 70 P18
website: www.inq7.net

SC: We're not cowed by Poe's supporters

GMA orders probe of Mindoro killings

By Madonna T. Virola
PDI Southern Luzon

"FAITHFULNESS to service and not making money from it," was the message in Filipino of the campaign flyers that Vice Mayor Juvy Magsino of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, was supposed to distribute as a mayoral candidate of the ruling Lakas-CMD in the May 10 elections.

Magsino, a lawyer and former official of the militant League of Filipino Students and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, did not get to distribute her campaign materials.

She and Bayan Muna district coordinator Leima Fortu were shot dead on Feb. 13, several hours after they attended the campaign rally of President Macapagal-Arroyo, her running mate Sen. Noli de Castro and the senatorial candidates of the administration K-4 coalition in Calapan City, the provincial capital.

Ms Macapagal has condemned the killings.

"The President strongly condemns the slaying of the candidate in Mindoro and her instruction was to have a thorough investigation immediately, find the motives and identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice," the President's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said on RMN radio.

But two presidential candidates lashed out at Ms Macapagal for the killings. Raul Roco, standard-bearer of Alyansa ng Pag-asa, said the series of election-related violence in the country showed a "breakdown of moral authority" in the Macapagal administration.

"Because if there is moral leadership, violence will go down. In Bicol, we have lost already four journalists. In Bohol, there was an attempt on the governor's life plus two local government leaders," Roco said.

Opposition presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson said the

GMA ORDERS/A22

EPA

CHIEF government negotiator Silvestre Bello (center) and Luis Jalandoni, head of the communist-led National Democratic Front panel, sign the joint statement that put the peace process back on track, more than two years after the first talks collapsed.

FPJ says he will abide by decision

By Michael Ubac, Christian V. Esguerra and Christine O. Avendaño

ASSERTING its role as the last bulwark of democracy, the Supreme Court said yesterday that it was not at all cowed by supporters of actor Fernando Poe Jr., who had warned of civil unrest should the tribunal rule against the opposition presidential candidate.

"These kinds of threats do not in any way intimidate or scare the Supreme Court into deciding the FPJ case," said Deputy Court Administrator Ismael Khan.

But Poe yesterday pledged to abide by the Supreme Court ruling on the issue of his citizenship, even if the high tribunal's decision would be adverse to him and disqualify him from the presidential race.

"Definitely, that's the law. I will abide by the law," Poe, who is leading all poll surveys, told reporters while on the campaign trail.

Speaking for the high court, Khan said this was the "pattern that the SC has got to expect whenever controversial issues are brought before it."

The tribunal has consolidated the three different petitions of lawyers Victorino Fornier, Maria Jeanette Tecson, Felix Desiderio and Zoilo Velez, asking it to disqualify Poe because he is allegedly not a natural-born Filipino citizen.

The court has scheduled for Thursday the oral arguments on the petition and has appointed four friends of the court to help it decide

SC/A8

Stop extortion, GMA asks Reds after talks

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau
and Christian V. Esguerra

BAGUIO CITY—Following a successful round of peace negotiations between the government and communist rebels in Norway, President Macapagal-Arroyo on Saturday night asked the insurgents to show good faith by stopping the collection of permit-to-campaign fees they were demanding from political candidates.

Ms Macapagal issued the appeal after representatives of the Philippine government and the communist-led National Democratic Front wrapped up four days of peace negotiations in Oslo with a compromise on the thorny issue of whether the rebels should continue to be labeled as "terrorists."

Chief government negotiator Silvestre Bello III yesterday said the two sides had set another round of formal talks in a bid to end 35 years of a communist insurgency that has killed thousands and blocked development efforts in the countryside.

Ms Macapagal described the so-called Oslo Joint Statement as

STOP/A10

Opposition should learn from primaries of US Democrats

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

SEN. JOHN Kerry of Massachusetts has consolidated his front-running position in the contest for the Democratic Party nomination of its challenger to US President George W. Bush in the November election, with victories over the weekend in party caucuses in Nevada and District of Columbia.

Kerry's wins swamped his remaining rivals for the nomination, building momentum for his campaign that appears irreversible, barring a shock upset, which is unlikely.

Kerry has won 12 of 14 Democratic caucuses and primary elections since the Jan. 19 Iowa caucuses and the Jan. 27 New Hampshire primary—which marked the astonishing turning point of Kerry's remarkable come-from-behind campaign. Last September, Kerry was considered good as dead by poll surveys. He was running third to former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean who, in a stunning collapse of his campaign, has not won a single Democratic caucus and primary.

With his weekend victories in Nevada and District of Columbia, Kerry has tucked under his belt 539 delegates to the Democratic convention, compared to 182 for Dean and 166 for Sen. John Edwards—two of the remaining serious contenders in a crowded field of nine after retired Gen. Wesley Clark gave up his presidential bid and endorsed Kerry. The endorsement came after Kerry trounced both Clark and Edwards in two southern states that

OPPOSITION/A22

REUTERS

WINNING IS SO COOL
Parokya ni Edgar, which popularized the song "Mr. Suave," won the Philippines' favorite artist award at the third MTV Asia Awards held Saturday in Singapore.

Joe Salazar's quiet life, times, fashion and faith

By Thelma Sioson-San Juan
Contributor

AT THE time of his death on Saturday, Joe Salazar, 59, a foremost Filipino fashion designer who was too reticent to ask for anything, had finally gotten the recognition he truly deserved from his peers and Philippine society. A retrospective exhibit and a *terno* review chronicling his contribution to Philippine fashion made 2003 truly his year.

"This must really be God's hand," he told us, incredulous, last September, right after the successful opening of his exhibit. He couldn't believe that we in Metro Magazine could pull it off in just over a month and, more than that, he was surprised that a huge power crowd, from *fashionistas* to artists and businessmen, had turned up. Salazar was never one to presume.

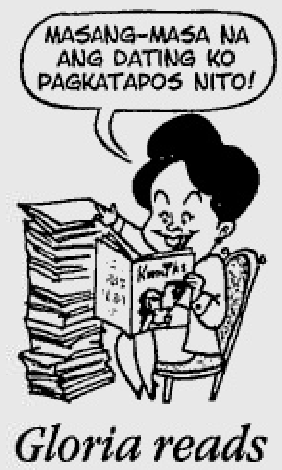
"Imagine, we didn't even plan, yet everything fell into place," he said.

We can never forget his gleeful tone. He was truly happy, in his typically quiet way. He kept saying how grateful

JOE SALAZAR'S/A22

RANDY HORMILLOSA

FASHION designer Salazar: God made all these happen.


MASANG-MASA NA ANG DATING KO PAGKATAPOS NITO!

Gloria reads 'komiks' for 'masa' appeal

By Juliet L. Javellana

GUESS who's reading Pinoy *komiks*?

President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is seeking a full-term in the May 10 polls, has been spending quite some time going through "Pinoy Klasik" and other *komiks* in earnest.

Although it seems she's actually relishing it, her

GLORIA/A9

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/16/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

FPJ raises fist at photographer

By Christine O. Avendaño

APPARENTLY caught by surprise, action king Fernando Poe Jr. raised his fist at a news photographer after the latter accidentally hit him with his camera on the left hand during a market visit in Lubao, Pampanga, on Thursday.

But Poe, the standard-bearer of the opposition, immediately dropped his fist when he saw that it was Eric de Castro, a photographer for the British wire agency Reuters who had hit him, according to INQUIRER photographer Edwin Bacasmas, who witnessed the incident.

Bacasmas said the incident happened as Poe and his fellow candidates in the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP), which barnstormed Pampanga on Feb. 12, made a stopover at the Lubao public market.

He said Poe had gone back to the truck he had been riding in after he shook hands with people in the market.

At that instance, reporters went to Poe for an ambush interview and Bacasmas said that fellow photographers scrambled to the presidential bet's truck after seeing a poster of President Macapagal Arroyo hanging from its rear.

"We wanted to take a picture with the President as his background," said Bacasmas, prompting him and other photographers to get into FPJ's truck.

As Bacasmas was climbing over, he said he saw De Castro, who went ahead of him, accidentally hit the left hand of Poe with his camera. This immediately drew a response from Poe who raised his fist.

"*Porma ng suntok* (It looked like a fist)," he said of Poe's move. He added that the presidential bet dropped his fist though when he saw that it was a photographer.

"*Parang* (like an) action star," Bacasmas commented. But Poe said yesterday he was not aware of what happened. "*Di ko alam yon. Di naman siguro* (I didn't know that. Probably not)," he said.

Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Poe's personal campaign manager, had a different story.

In Urdaneta, Pangasinan yesterday, which the KNP visited, Sotto told reporters that he remembered an incident in the Lubao market where Poe had admonished a security aide for shoving aside reporters and photographers as well as people welcoming him.

Sotto said that he told the security aides not to push the people away.

"*Hayaan ninyo makamayan siya* (Let them shake his hand)," he said he told security aides of Poe.

The opposition senator dismissed the incident involving De Castro as a mere "text message" that he said he received and has been going around.

A reporter received such a message as well and it detailed the incident in Lubao, but this time it went even further by saying that Sotto had prevailed upon Poe not to hit De Castro.

ACTION king and presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. takes Holy Communion in Manaoag, Pangasinan, yesterday with the same hand that he reportedly raised at a photographer who accidentally hit him with a camera last week. Behind is his running mate Sen. Loren Legarda. EDWIN BACASMAS

Joker Arroyo retains title of 'Scrooge' of Congress

By Michael Lim Ubac

SEN. JOKER Arroyo is still Congress' undisputed Scrooge.

For the 12th straight year, Arroyo has maintained his reputation as the most frugal legislator, spending only P8.1 million from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2002, according to an audit of senators' expenses based on Commission on Audit regulations.

The head of the powerful Blue Ribbon Committee, Arroyo also incurred the lowest expenses in 2001 (P5.39 million), the year he assumed his Senate seat, carrying over the badge of parsimony he had earned while serving a full nine-year term in the House of Representatives.

The list showed Arroyo spent only P8,132,867.75 for the salaries of his staff, as well as expenses for meetings, conferences and office supplies. He also did not charge for any foreign travel, professional or consultancy fees and had no office space and equipment rentals and capital outlay against the Senate budget.

Just as thrifty was Sen. Juan Flavier, who spent P9.4 million in 2002. The mid-range spenders were Senators Edgardo Angara (P10.4 million), Manuel Villar (P10.6 million) and Sergio Osmeña III (P10.9 million).

On the other side of the aisle, opposition Sen. Vicente Sotto III topped the list of Senate high rollers.

Sotto disbursed taxpayer money to the tune of P12.6 million, followed closely by Senators Ralph Recto (P12.4 million), Aquilino Pimentel Jr. (P12.3 million) and John Osmeña (P12.1 million).

Senate President Franklin Drilon, former Majority Leader Loren Legarda and the rest of the senators belonged to the mid-range spenders, spending P11 million and above each. And while Sen. Panfilo Lacson had waived his 2003 pork barrel allocation, Arroyo had not bothered to touch his at all.

Based on the same list, Sotto also had the most number of staffers who could be the most pampered employees in the Senate, receiving P7.3 million in salaries and benefits. In comparison, Arroyo's staff only received a total package of P791,338. Angara spent P2.1 million in professional or consultancy fees, compared to Drilon's P8,900.

Asked earlier why he had only two staff members and a driver, Arroyo said: "Well, I have a very efficient staff." Since close to half of the populace is wallowing in poverty, he said spending more than what the legislative work really entailed was immoral. Although he was understaffed in the House, Arroyo boasted that he logged 100 percent attendance for nine years. In the Senate, Arroyo and Flavier have the best attendance records.

Arroyo received a heavy volume of mail, more than any congressman at any given time during his three terms in the House. "It was not very convenient. I had to sort and read the mail myself and send out written replies." He also wrote his press releases by hand when he was a congressman. In the Senate, he still writes his own statements, but these are now either typewritten or printed on a computer.

PCASO
PHILIPPINE CHAMBER OF ARRASTRE AND STEVEDORING OPERATORS

MANIFESTO
OF TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION

WHEREAS, the Philippine Chamber of Arrastre and Stevedoring Operators (PCASO for brevity) is an association of cargo handling service providers duly licensed to render stevedoring and arrastre services in various ports within the Philippine archipelago;

WHEREAS, it is the primary objective of PCASO to mold and make the Philippine ports globally competitive in terms of productivity, efficiency and effectivity;

WHEREAS, the Chamber, consistent with its organizational vision and aspirations, aims to become instrumental in maintaining industrial peace in the ports through effective and realistic partnership with the appropriate government agencies;

WHEREAS, the Chamber, for the past years has worked closely with the incumbent national leadership, and in partnership therewith, has advanced its cause and aspirations above stated;

WHEREAS, the present administration under the leadership of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has shown commitment and coupled with concrete actions towards the improvement of port services over the country as well as industrial peace in the cargo handling labor sector; and

WHEREFORE, for and in consideration of the foregoing premises, the members of the Philippine Chamber of Arrastre and Stevedoring Operators, manifesting its full trust and confidence in the present national leadership, have resolved, as they do hereby resolve, to extend their full support to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her bid for re-election this coming May 2004 national elections.

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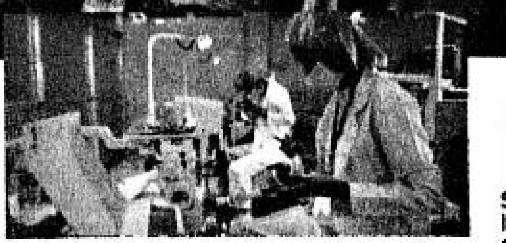

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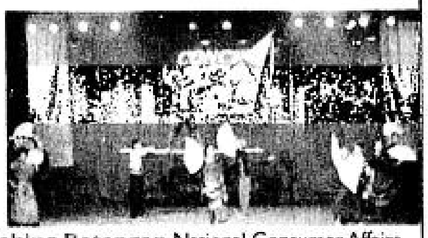

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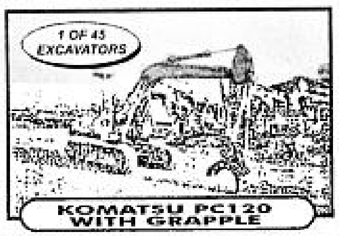
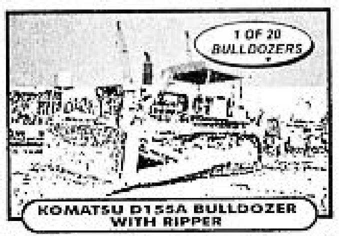


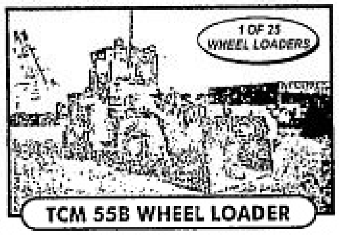
1 OF 45 EXCAVATORS

KOMATSU PC120 WITH GRAPPLE



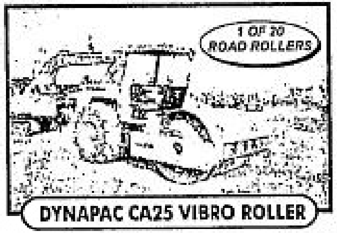
1 OF 20 BULLDOZERS

KOMATSU D155A BULLDOZER WITH RIPPER



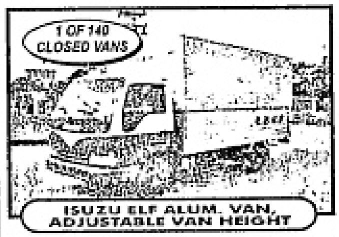
1 OF 25 WHEEL LOADERS

TCM 55B WHEEL LOADER



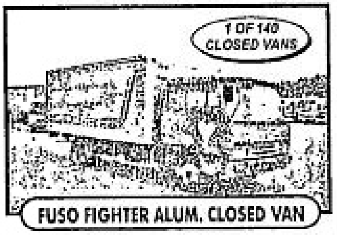
1 OF 20 ROAD ROLLERS

DYNAPAC CA25 VIBRO ROLLER



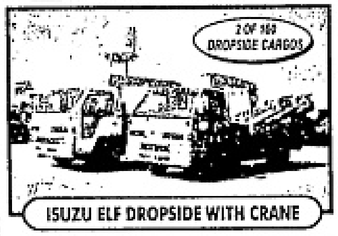
1 OF 140 CLOSED VANS

ISUZU ELF ALUM. VAN, ADJUSTABLE VAN HEIGHT



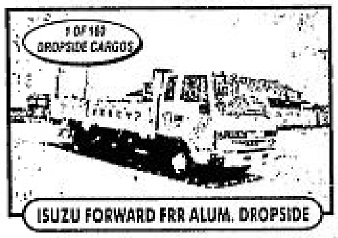
1 OF 140 CLOSED VANS

FUSO FIGHTER ALUM. CLOSED VAN



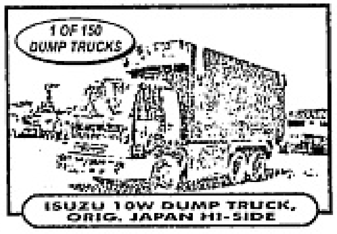
2 OF 160 DROPSIDE CARGOS

ISUZU ELF DROPSIDE WITH CRANE



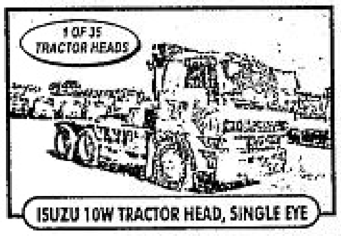
1 OF 160 DROPSIDE CARGOS

ISUZU FORWARD FRR ALUM. DROPSIDE



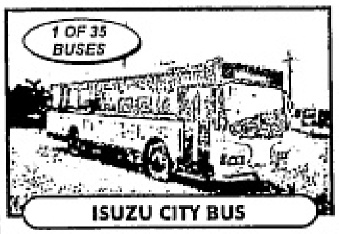
1 OF 150 DUMP TRUCKS

ISUZU 10W DUMP TRUCK, ORIG. JAPAN HI-SIDE



1 OF 35 TRACTOR HEADS

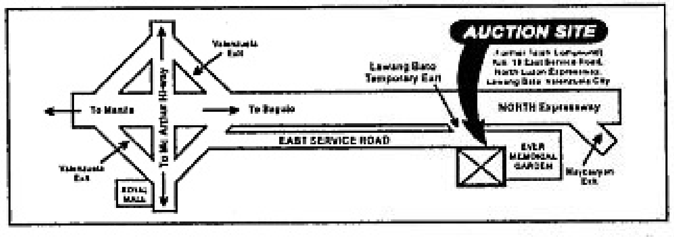
ISUZU 10W TRACTOR HEAD, SINGLE EYE



1 OF 35 BUSES

ISUZU CITY BUS

ISUZU ELF BACKHOE TRUCK



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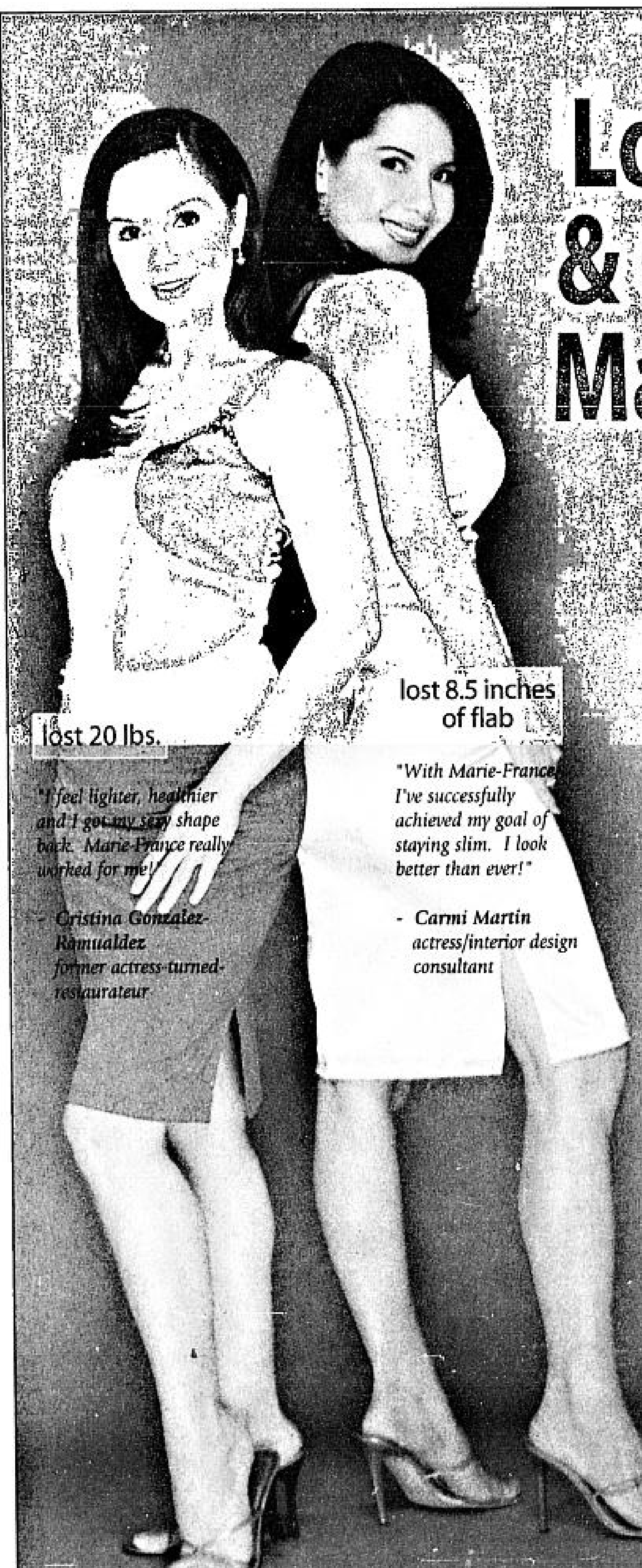
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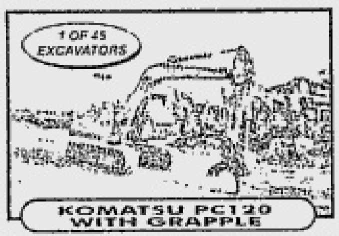

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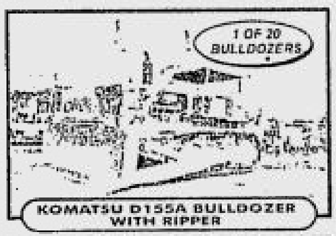

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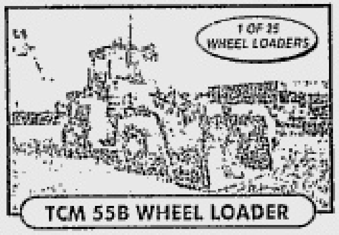

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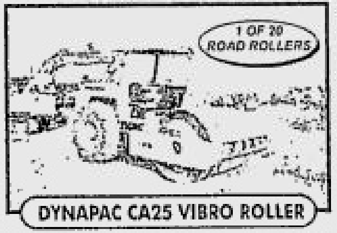

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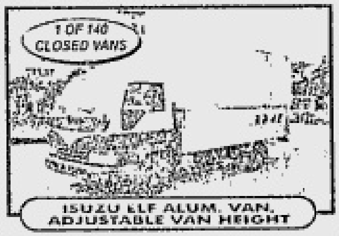

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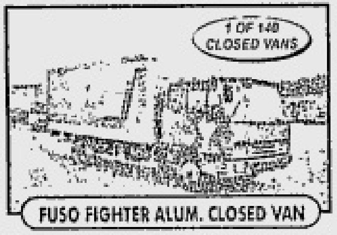

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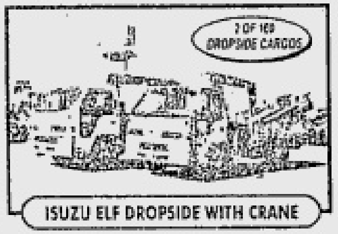

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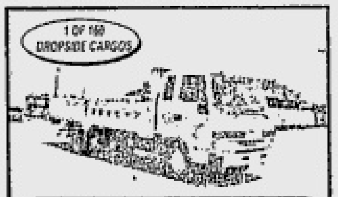

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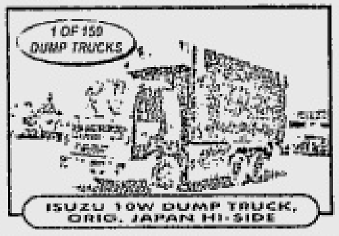

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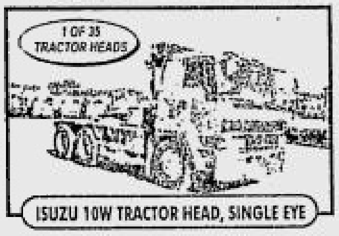

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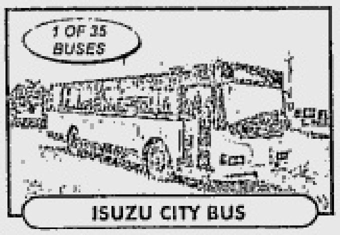

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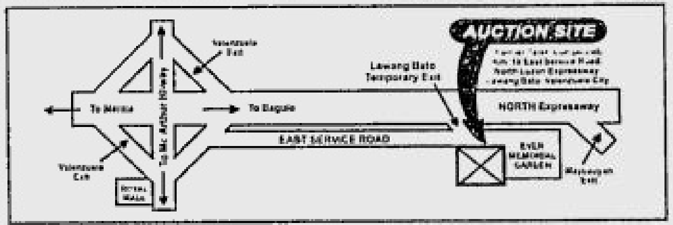

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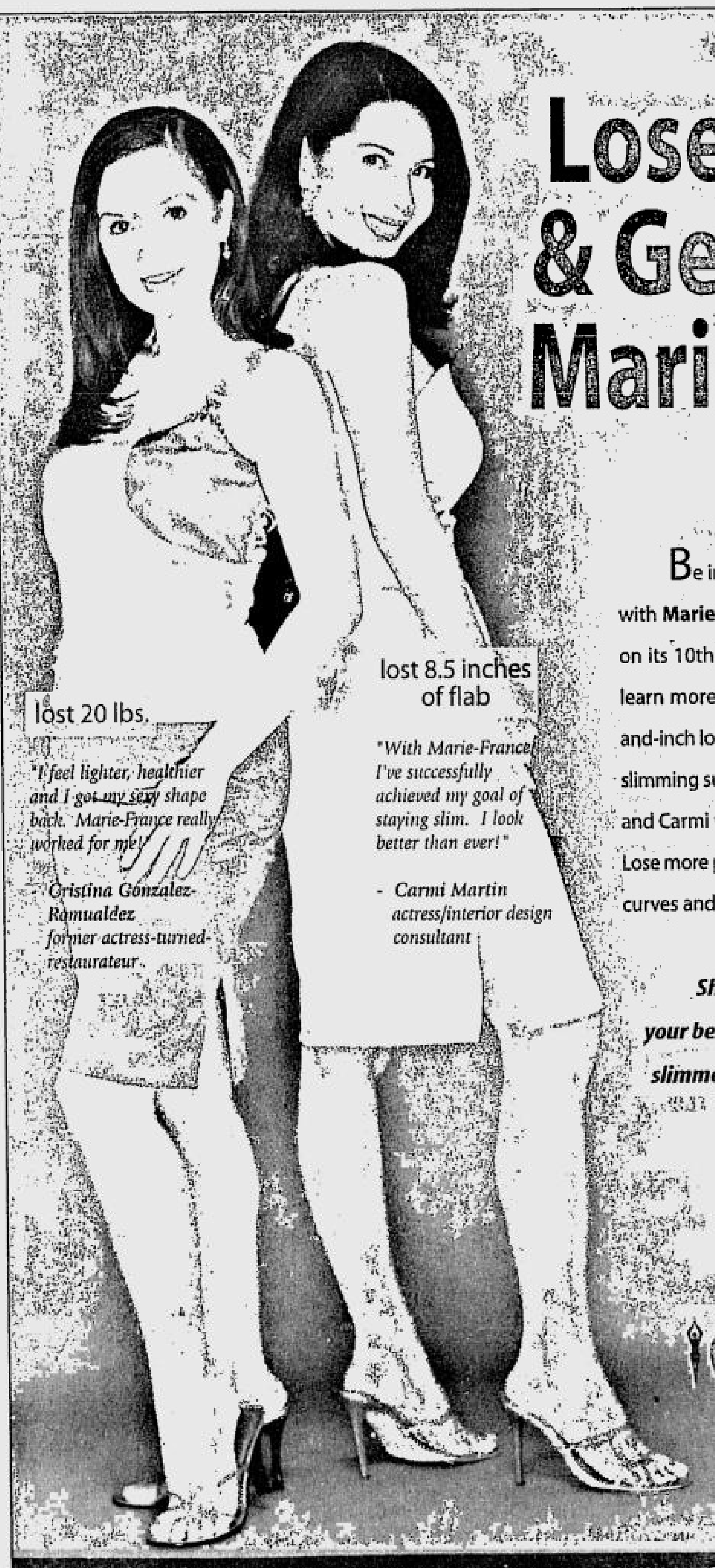

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Messiah coming–Roco

By Michael Lim Ubac and Tj Burgonio

ALYANSA ng Pag-Asa presidential candidate Raul Roco yesterday compared the next President to a messiah who will redeem the country from the dark abyss.

"One of us will eventually become a messiah," said Roco, stressing that the country's 36 million voters cannot afford to elect just anybody to chart their future for the next six years.

Talking in parable, Roco said there was a town which used to be happy and prosperous because its people worked as one. But by some stroke of fate, the townsfolk became lonely and the town became gloomy.

Bereft of joy and inspiration, a guru (teacher) came one day, telling the people that Heaven would send someone—a messiah—who will bring back the town's lost glory.

When the townsfolk asked if they were being punished, the guru said: "One of you will become a messiah. But you don't know him yet, he will be known later."

And so, Roco said, the people began to work as one again, helping one another, doing good things with the hope that one of them will be the chosen one.

As a result, the people became united, and the town became happy again.

Turning to Alyansa supporters, Roco said the townsfolk were the 80 million Filipinos. "We can be the messiah by being responsible ... working together, helping one another."

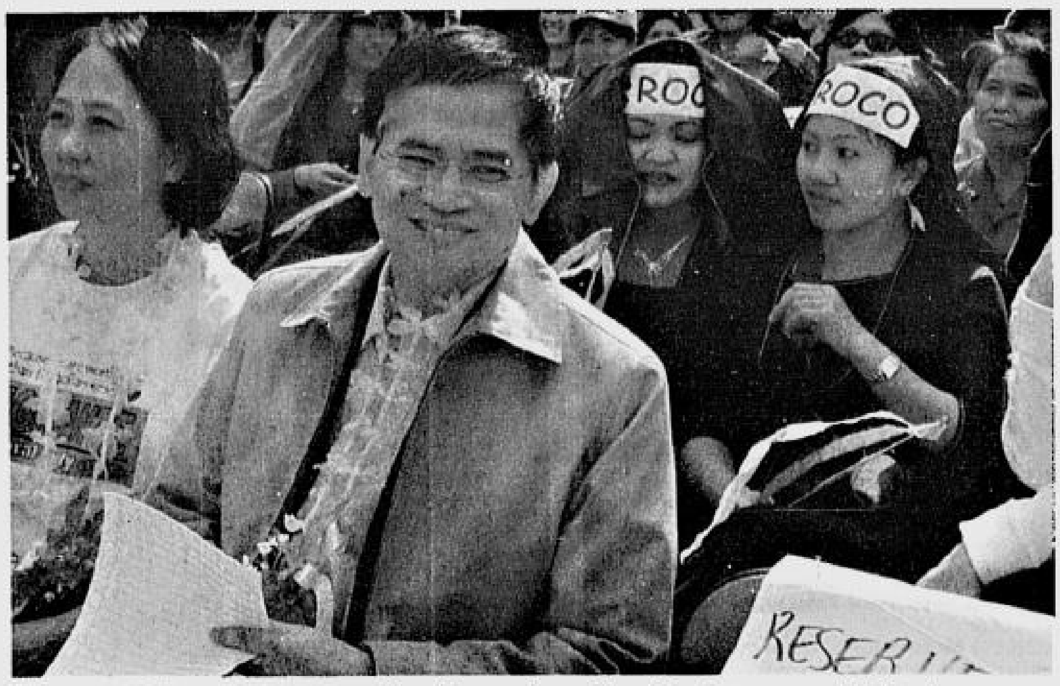
If we only help one another rise from our present economic and political stagnation, "one of us will become the messiah."

But Alyansa senatorial candidate Edno Joson, former governor of Nueva Ecija, said the people should not look far. "We can see the messiah in the persona of Raul Roco."

Joson said Roco impersonated the characteristics of a messiah—who is willing to challenge the existing order to save his people from doom.

Roco narrated the parable during the inauguration of the headquarters of Aksyon Demokratiko, one of the convenors of Alyansa ng Pag-Asa, in Pasig City.

After leading the inauguration, the Alyansa slate trooped to the Neptali Gonzales High School in Mandaluyong City, then motored to Montalban in Rizal to visit an urban poor resettlement area.



BRO. EDDIE Villanueva takes his presidential campaign to Hong Kong but apparently fails to impress some Filipino domestic helpers (behind) who let him know who their candidate is. At left is Migrante party-list candidate for representative Connie Bragas-Regalado. DANTE PERALTA/CONTRIBUTOR

Bro. Eddie draws mixed reactions in Hong Kong

HONG KONG—Presidential candidate Bro. Eddie Villanueva pressed the flesh with Filipino domestic helpers here Sunday, hoping to parlay the support he's gained as a Christian evangelist into a winning campaign.

Villanueva may be outmatched by President Macapagal-Arroyo, action star Fernando Poe Jr. and former Senator and Education Secretary Raul Roco, but his appearance added a bit of color to a bright Sunday—when maids here get their weekly day-off.

Sporting a gray jacket and pink shirt with a garland around his neck, Villanueva greeted picnicking Filipinos, praising their work and the cash they send home.

"The Philippine economy is being kept afloat by the foreign exchange being remitted by our countrymen abroad," Villanueva told The Associated Press as he started stumping.

Overseas Filipinos can vote for the first time ever in the May elections, and more than 360,000 have registered—almost 89,000 of them in Hong Kong.

But Filipinos here voiced mixed responses to Villanueva.

"We know he can fight corruption," said 33-year-old Bernadette Bernabe of Nueva Vizcaya, a fan who joined the Sunday crowd.

Others were less impressed.

"I don't like him," said Estrella Sagadraca, 41, a native of Ilocos Norte who was more impressed by Ms Macapagal's experience. "She's done something already. I don't like to change the government again."

A Marxist radical turned flamboyant evangelist, Villanueva lacks the backing of a traditional political party.

But he commands some support as the leader of a prominent Christian group, the Jesus Is Lord Movement.

The group once claimed 7 million members around the world.

A Senate candidate from Roco's party, lawyer Melanio Mauricio, also was making the rounds Sunday.

Villanueva has said he prefers a federalist form of government and is open to Charter change if the people want it.

In his primer on government, Villanueva said he believes federalism is best for the country but he would not insist on it if the Filipinos think otherwise. *AP; Blanche S. Rivera*

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, February 16, 2004
6th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Jas 1:1-11
Gospel: Mk 8:11-13

The Pharisess came and started to argue with Jesus. Hoping to embarrass him, they asked for some heavenly sign. Then his spirit was moved. He gave a deep sigh and said, "Why do the people of this present time ask for a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this people." Then he left them, got into the boat again and went to the other side of the lake.

Commentary

Today's reading is just a warm-up for tomorrow's: when Jesus rails against "the yeast of the Pharisees," it will be useful to have a recent reminder of what they are like.

"Hoping to embarrass him they asked for some heavenly sign." His miracles (which always appealed to faith) were not enough; they wanted a spectacle. A spectacle would amuse (or fail to amuse) the idle, not touch their hearts—because their hearts were untouchable. They wanted to make a trial of him, without being on trial themselves. They would taunt him from the sideline while remaining safely out of reach themselves. That's not fair play in any field.

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Malaysia delays RP-MILF peace talks

EXPLORATORY talks on ending the decades-old Muslim rebellion have been delayed at the request of peace broker Malaysia, a government official said yesterday.

The talks, which Manila had hoped would lead to the rapid resumption of long-stalled formal peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the country's biggest Muslim separatist group, were to have been held in Kuala Lumpur starting today.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had expressed the hope the government could strike peace deals with the Muslims and with communist rebels separately fighting for a Marxist state before the presidential elections in May.

But analysts have said the chances of ending the two revolts anytime soon were remote.

The talks with the Muslim rebels have been delayed a few days "on the request of Malaysia," Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia said.

The neighboring Muslim country cited "administrative reasons" for the delay, said Garcia, Philippine ceasefire panel chief, who was to take part in the meeting.

"Definitely, it's not going to be tomorrow, but we are expecting it to be held any time within a few days," he said.

The talks were meant to discuss the specific role of a team of 25 Malaysian observers which will monitor a shaky ceasefire between Manila and the MILF. *Reuters*

Manapat also created disk vs Ping, says Lacson camp

By Norman Bordadora

CARDONA, Rizal—If FPJ is American, could Ping Lacson be Chinese?

The administration may have fabricated "very damaging" material supposedly from the National Archives to start a demolition job against opposition presidential bet Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a senatorial candidate said yesterday.

Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Carlos Padilla, Lacson's only senatorial candidate under the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, said the LDP obtained two disks from former Archives head Ricardo Manapat's office after the director went on leave.

"One (disk) was against opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr., while the other one was against Senator Lacson. We got the disks with the help of the archives employees who stood as witnesses against Manapat," Padilla said.

Although he has yet to preview the disk, Padilla made it clear that it contained fabricated archives material that would be detrimental to Lacson's campaign whether or not the citizenship issue against Poe prospered in the Supreme Court.

"It's very damaging," Padilla told reporters who gathered for Lacson's visit to this remote fishing village for its town fiesta.

Lacson said the administration is doing everything to cripple the opposition's chances in the May elections.

"(With Manapat's exposé), they made FPJ an American citizen. With this new disk, they might want to make me a Chinese citizen," Lacson said.

Lacson, a former national police chief who led a crackdown on kidnapping for ransom against Chinese-Filipino businessmen and their scions, enjoys the support of most of the country's Chinese community.

The disks are now reportedly with Lacson spokesperson Lito Banayo.

PCGG did right by martial law victims, says exec

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

WITH OR without a compensation law, the Presidential Commission on Good Government believes it has done its duty for the victims of abuse during martial law.

"Our duty is to be able to convey to the Swiss Ministry of Justice that efforts were taken (to compensate the victims)," said PCGG Commissioner Ruben Carranza.

Compensation was among the conditions set by the Swiss Federal Supreme Court when it transferred the funds seized from the family of late strongman Ferdinand Marcos to the Philippines in 1997 even without a final court ruling.

The Philippine government had promised the Swiss government it would compensate the victims.

Carranza insisted that "the commitment was to take steps, not to compensate."

"Of course it's so much better if the effort succeeded," he added.

Before Congress went on recess on Jan. 6, the legislators were able to pass House Bill No. 4535 which sets up an P8-billion compensation fund. The counterpart bill in the Senate failed to pass after the senators took up another matter.

Carranza refused to comment, saying the PCGG's main concern is that a law is passed when Congress resumes sessions after the May 10 presidential elections. The PCGG fears the bill might be shelved again when the new Congress opens on June 30.

"We don't have any control of (the law's contents). It's up to Congress. We'll be happy with a law that compensates victims of the Marcos regime," Carranza said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is seeking another term, had ordered that P8 billion of the $684 million (P38.3 billion) seized from the Marcoses be set aside pending the passage of a compensation law. Unless it's passed, all recovered ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses and their cronies would go to the agrarian reform program of the government.

"There's no contingency measure. If there's no law, then there's the existing law (that all ill-gotten wealth would go to agrarian reform)," Carranza said.

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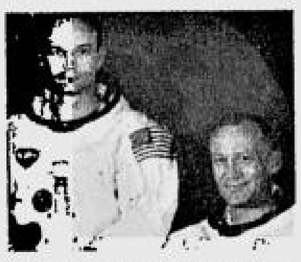

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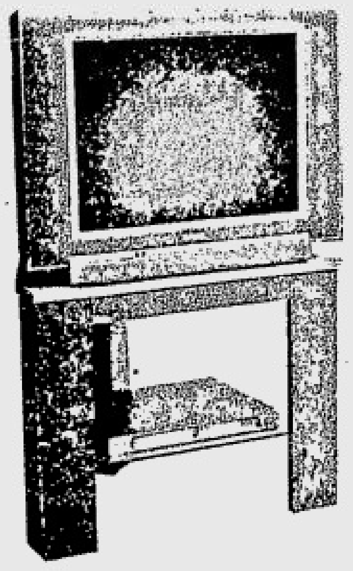

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Gov't needs ₱3.6B to immunize Pinoys vs flu

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE GOVERNMENT will need P3.6 billion to immunize high-risk groups against influenza as international health experts warned against a possible pandemic in the next four years following the bird flu virus.

Madeleine Valera, Philippine Health Insurance vice president for quality assurance and policy development, said that since the emergence of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) last year, health experts have been studying how to prevent similar viruses from afflicting the public.

She said the Optimum Five conference in Okinawa, Japan last October warned governments that there could be a pandemic of influenza in the next two to four years.

Working with WHO

In a forum at the Manila Pavilion yesterday, Valera said the government agency has been working with the World Health Organization to draft guidelines in battling disease, influenza in particular.

One of the proposed strategies is to vaccinate people as soon as possible. Valera said Philhealth was studying whether it could include immunization in its medical care package.

Initial studies showed that the Philippines would need some P3.6 billion to immunize priority groups like senior citizens, babies up to 23 months of age, health care workers and those with immune-deficiency illnesses.

Rising expenses

"I do not know if the government can afford this," Valera said. Last year, Philhealth spent P10.9 billion in benefit payments. Expenses have been increasing by almost P2 billion yearly since 1998.

The cheapest vaccine available for the southern hemisphere type influenza costs P475, yet the P3.6 billion cost estimate for immunization had the vaccine priced at only P350.

"We're asking vaccine manufacturers to help by lowering their prices," Valera said.

Savings per person

Studies have also shown that Philhealth would save around P3,200 in the cost of drugs, professional fees and sick leave benefits per person if they implemented the immunization program.

Valera noted that pneumonia and influenza patients were the top reimbursed cases in Philhealth. Influenza cases peak in June and July, and from October to December, she said.

Bird flu has killed at least 19 people in Asia, which was hardest hit by the H5N1 virus of the subtype of influenza A, known as avian influenza or bird flu virus.

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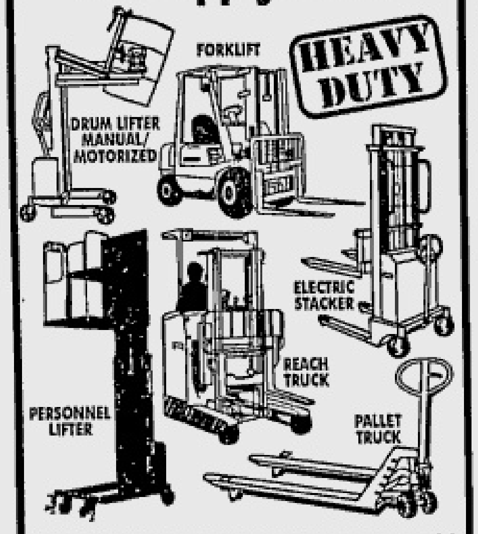

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MACAU	100	160	JEDDAH	360	710
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OSAKA	220	375	BAHRAIN	290	670
FUKUOKA	190	340	HONOLULU	330	630
NAGOYA	190	340	LOS ANGELES	350	720
TAIPEI	140	285	SAN FRANCISCO	350	720
SAIGON	195	255	NEW YORK	410	810
SEOUL	180	370	GUAM	290	360
KUALA LUMPUR	190	235	VANCOUVER	350	720
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RP-wide anti-drugs caravan rolls off

"ALL SYSTEMS are go for Lakbay Kontra Droga 2004," Interior Secretary Jose Lina said yesterday on the eve of the nationwide week-long anti-drugs caravan which reels off today from 14 points.

The caravan will go to each barangay from Batanes to Jolo to gather firsthand information on the drug problem, Lina said.

The 14 areas are Sorsogon City; Abra de Ilog, Mindoro Occidental; Roxas, Mindoro Oriental; Brookes Point and Damaran, Palawan; San Jose, Antique; San Carlos City and Sipalay, Negros Occidental; Guimaras; Tagbilaran City; Toledo City; Vallehermoso and Basay, Negros Oriental, and Siquijor.

Lina said the caravan will conduct drug symposia, a slogan contest and film showings, and update barangay drug-watch lists in conjunction with local government units and non-government organizations. *Nelson F. Flores*

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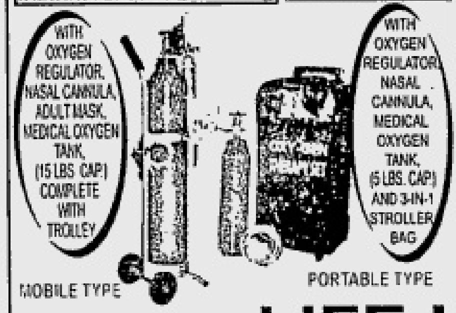

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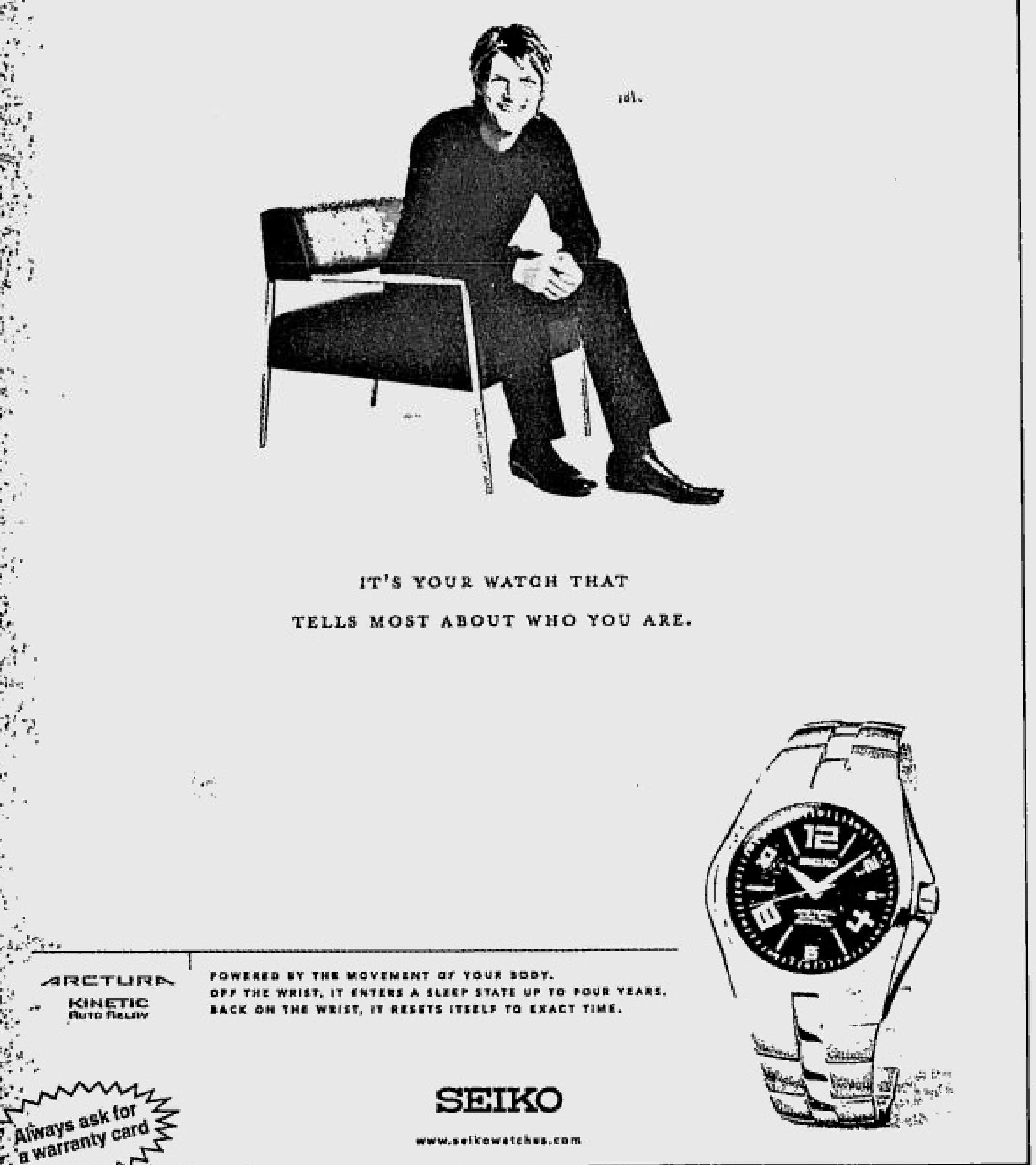

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SC: We're not cowed by Poe's supporters

From page A1

on the disqualification petition.

Salonga's view

Former Senate President Jovito Salonga yesterday said the Supreme Court was facing a much tougher dilemma in the disqualification petition against Poe than the petition that had questioned the legitimacy of the Macapagal administration three years ago.

"This is a more difficult case," he said in a telephone interview.

Salonga said the public had been "conditioned" by Poe's supporters that a decision unfavorable to the presidential candidate "should be rejected."

"There's a different kind of mind-conditioning today," he said, noting that Poe's supporters have warned of civil unrest in case of a disqualification.

In contrast, the 2001 petition questioning the legitimacy of the Macapagal administration was not too tough to swallow because the public had been "conditioned" that she was the legitimate president, Salonga said.

Text rumors

Asked to comment on rumors the SC had voted 8-5 to disqualify him, Poe said the rumors were being passed through text messages. "Not all text messages are true. Hopefully, the SC will judge on the merits of the case," he said.

The rumors against Poe agitated many of his followers who threatened to take to the streets and incite unrest if their candidate was disqualified.

Poe, however, downplayed the threat. *"Di naman siguro* (Probably not). I am against violence and unrest," he said.

Poe's cool response yesterday was in stark contrast to his earlier veiled threat against the occupants of Malacañang whom he suspects of being behind the move to disqualify him. *"Baka sila ang hindi na sikatan ng araw* (They might not see the light of day)," Poe had told residents of Mariveles.

Desperate

In Dagupan City, Poe's running mate Sen. Loren Legarda dismissed reports that the actor would eventually be disqualified from the presidential race for not being a natural-born Filipino.

Legarda, who was with Poe and fellow candidates of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, said the reports that the Supreme Court had already come out with a ruling to disqualify Poe were nothing but the work of the "desperate."

"There's a desperate move to keep him out of the race for he is a runaway winner," she said.

At a news conference with Legarda, KNP senatorial candidate Francisco Tatad warned that people would not take kindly any move to disqualify Poe.

He claimed that there was a "popular belief that FPJ will be the next president."

"There is no way of predicting what will happen, but any act of injustice or unfairness versus Poe will provoke terrible things on the ground," he said.

But Tatad said he hoped there would be no "spontaneous combustion."

Tatad said there was no basis to disqualify Poe because the latter was a natural-born Filipino.

He expressed concern on "persistent reports" that the Supreme Court had already drafted a ruling to disqualify Poe. But he said he hoped this was not true.

Tatad said he hoped that the justices would "become statesmen." He noted that the "Supreme Court is pure, but the justices are not," saying that "many of the appointees are partisan to this administration."

Remain calm

Khan urged the people to remain calm and "listen" only to official pronouncement by the en banc.

At this stage, it is very important that the people rely on the Supreme Court rather than feed on the malicious insinuations of other sectors, he said.

"I think everybody should be assured that whatever the ruling of the SC, it will be in accordance with the facts and the law," the Supreme Court spokesperson said.

Khan cited instances in the past when the high court had faced similar controversial cases.

Referring to Poe, his supporters, and Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Khan reminded them that it was premature to speculate on the possible outcome of the petition considering that it had yet to be given due course.

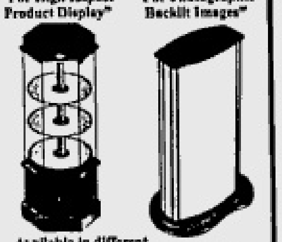
"The high court has not yet assumed jurisdiction over the petition to disqualify Poe and so it's very early in the day to make heads and tails out of it," he said.

Pocket protests

The People's Alliance for Truth and Justice, a group of Poe supporters, yesterday said it would launch a series of mass actions in time for the oral arguments.

"We will not take this sitting down," said Arnold Obina, PATJ convenor. "We will urge the Supreme Court to really study the case and not allow itself to become part of a grand scheme to have our leader disqualified."

Obina said the PATJ, the FPJ for President Movement, the Association of Generals for Poe (Agpoe) and other groups would meet today to discuss plans for the protest actions.



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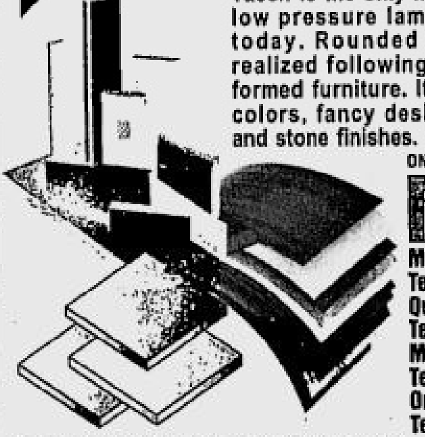

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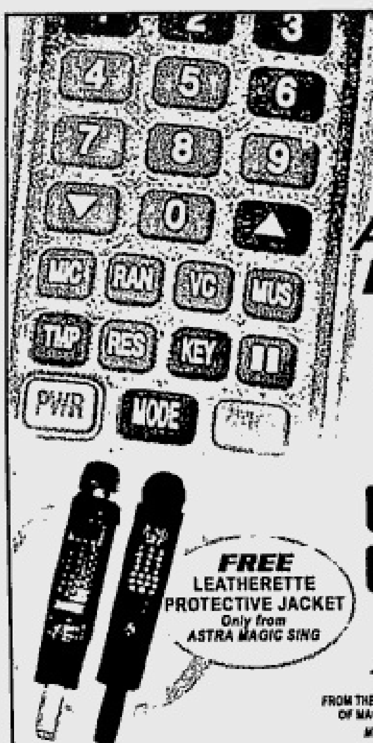

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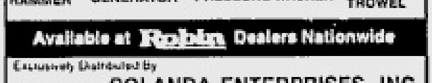

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Gloria reads 'komiks' for 'masa' appeal

From page A1

new hobby has an urgent utilitarian purpose.

According to Palace sources, Ms Macapagal is working double time to improve her Filipino, get its nuances right, and eventually speak it the straight, street-smart way—the better to endear herself to the *masa* in a campaign that has pitted her against the man who's considered "King of Philippine Movies."

Fernando Poe Jr., aka "Da King," has starred in countless films playing hero of the downtrodden, delivering the requisite punches—and punchlines—flawlessly. The fans love it, even now (especially now?) that he has been using movie screenplay-sounding quips to spice up his campaign speeches.

The President is not leaving anything to chance. Sources say she has been reading *komiks* stuff, "even love stories," to familiarize herself with day-to-day exchanges among the common *tao*.

A Palace official said Ms Macapagal was also holding more frequent discussions with radio commentators to practice her Filipino while addressing their concerns. Another source said the President was, in fact, being "tutored" by a retired radio man.

Daughter of the late President Diosdado Macapagal, who was fondly called "Poor boy from Lubao," Ms Macapagal was an economics graduate and university professor before she followed in her father's footsteps. The language in her household is said to be Spanish. Aside from this, she speaks in English and French.

Marita "Mai" Jimenez, presidential adviser on official development assistance projects and a close confidante, said Ms Macapagal could manage conversational Tagalog, Kapampangan, Pangalatok, Ilocano, Ilonggo, Cebuano and Chavacano.

In her provincial sorties, the President switches intermittently and effortlessly to the local dialect. But when it comes to Filipino (which is largely based on Tagalog), she could be comically inept when translating key lines from an English speech for the benefit of a mass audience.

During the failed Oakwood mutiny on July 27, Ms Macapagal repeatedly said her government would respect freedom of expression and tolerate dissent only up to a certain point. "*Iguguhit natin ang linya*," she said, meaning she would draw the line clearly between legal protests and attempts at destabilization.

In recent weeks, she has harped on her "experience" as Chief Executive in the past three years as a distinct advantage over her rivals. Though she inherited four million jobless Filipinos and political chaos from her predecessor, she said in several speeches, "*pinaikot-ikot namin ang ekonomiya*." She really meant to say only that she turned the economy around. The imagery being far from agreeable, this naturally sent reporters guffawing.

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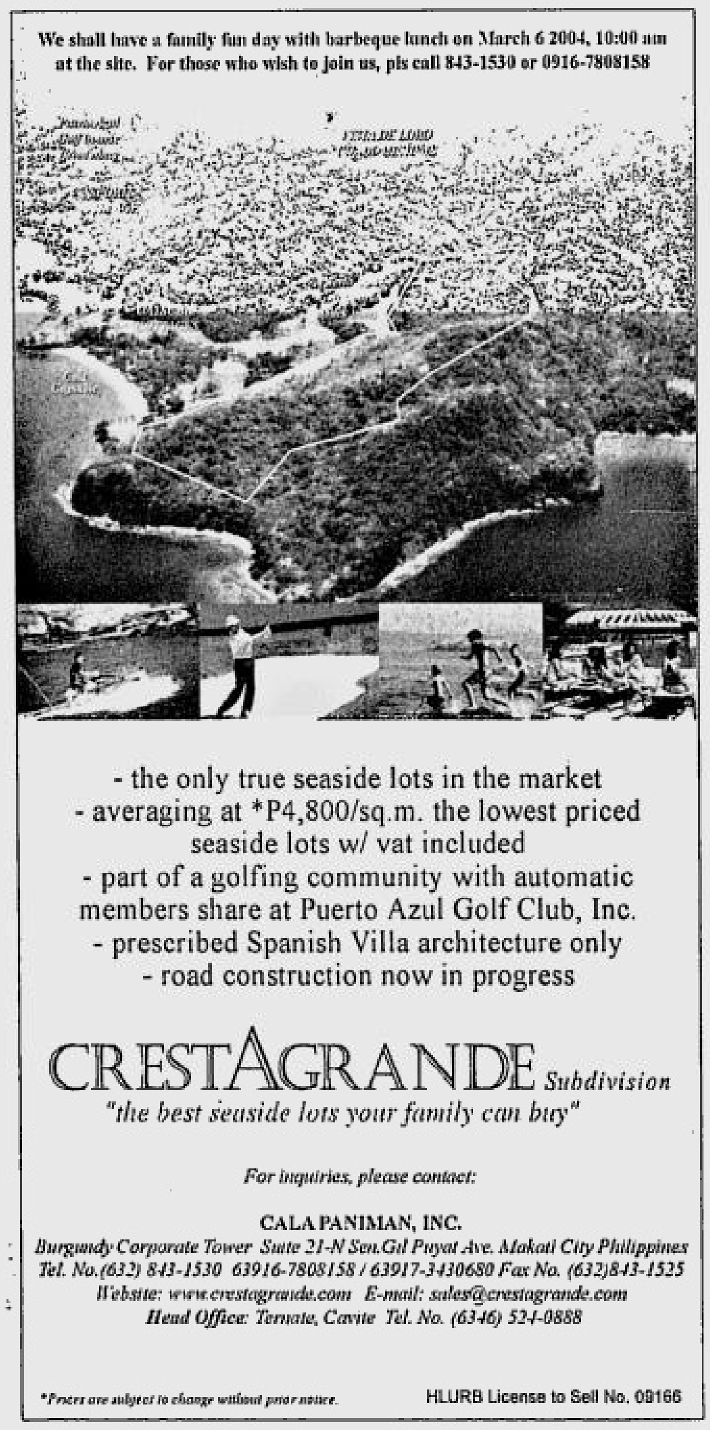

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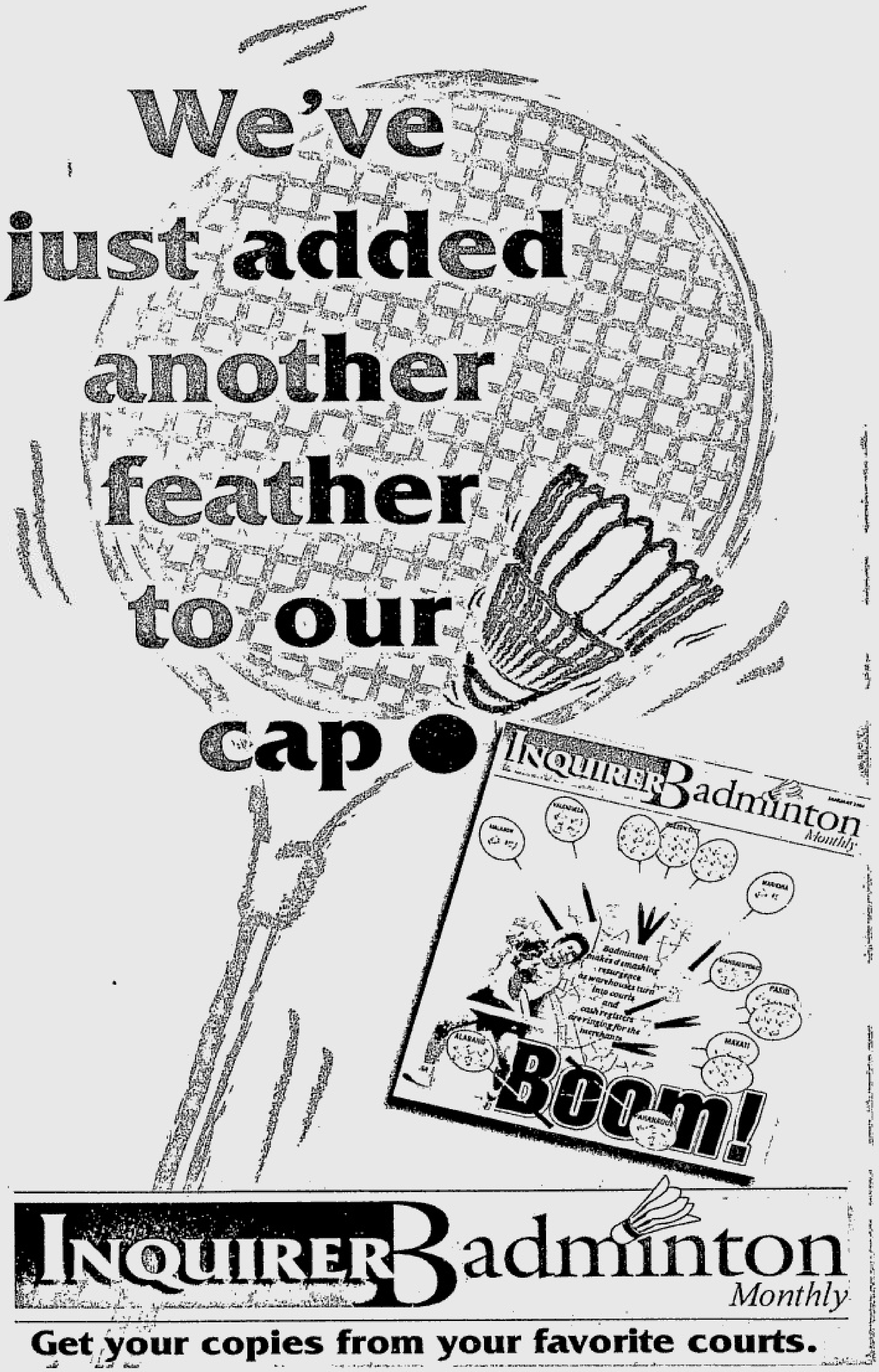

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American troops back . . .

From page A1

military exercise Balikatan-04.

The high-speed vessel "West Pac Express," that carried the troops from the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force based in Okinawa, Japan, docked at the old naval supply depot pier here at around 8 a.m. yesterday. It also transported military equipment, such as highly mobile multipurpose vehicles and communications equipment to be used during the field training.

Capt. Burrell Parmer, US Armed Forces public information officer, said 1,800 more American troops were due to arrive in the next few days to join 2,300 Filipino soldiers participating in simultaneous training in three military camps in Luzon from Feb. 23 to March 7.

Sunday's contingent proceeded to the Philippine Air Force camp at the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga, the biggest American military air base in the Asia-Pacific region until 1991.

Clad in camouflage, the Marines descended down a gangplank from the leased with containers of supplies, Humvees, forklifts, rifles and other military equipment. They are due to be flown immediately to the AFP Western Command headquarters in Puerto Princesa City.

No Spratlys mission

Parmer reiterated that no exercises would be done in the Spratlys group of islands, contrary to earlier reports.

He said the activities would be restricted to the Wescom camp and "nowhere near" the Spratlys that are being contested, in whole or in part, by the Philippines, China, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam. Five of the claimants have put troops on islands or reefs in the chain, which guards key shipping routes and rich fishing grounds.

Maj. Michael Samson, chief of the administration and operations branch of the AFP public information office, said the mutual defense board of the two countries had decided to include Puerto Princesa as venue for the command post exercise and humanitarian assistance.

He said the troops would build and repair school buildings in the city. "The decision has nothing to do with Palawan's strategic location or whatsoever," he said.

According to Parmer, the US military is spending $200,000 for humanitarian missions in Palawan and Batanes. Other civic assistance projects include medical, dental and veterinary clinics at selected areas.

Engineering projects to improve the local infrastructure will also be conducted during the exercise, Samson said.

War games

Aside from Wescom, where the training is being held for the first time, war games are also scheduled in Clark, in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija, and in Ternate, Cavite.

For the first time, civic assistance is scheduled in Palawan and in Basco, Batanes, where the landing of US aircraft since 2001 became subjects of complaints from some residents and Batanes Rep. Florencio Abad.

Parmer said this year's Balikatan covered types of training dealing with a "variety of threats to include terrorism."

"The focus of the Balikatan is to improve our combined training, combat readiness and interoperability," he said.

Asked about the threats from terrorist groups operating in the country, Parmer said the US forces were confident in the security arrangements made between the United States and the Philippines.

"As with every military operation, there is an element of risk. US military members are required to take safety precautions, including force protection requirements," he said.

Large-scale war games and smaller exercises jointly conducted by Philippine and US troops stopped in 1991 when the Senate rejected the extension of the 1947 US-Philippine Military Bases Agreement.

But the exercises resumed in 1999 after the Senate approved the Visiting Forces Agreement that was aimed at strengthening the 54-year-old mutual defense treaty between the two countries.

Parmer said this year's Balikatan was the 20th in a series of exercises. *With INQUIRER wires*

Stop extortion . . .

From page A1

a "very, very good conclusion to this round of talks in Oslo." But she said the rebels should immediately show good faith.

"I call upon the New People's Army to desist from (taxing political candidates), especially in light of the good news that we are receiving now from Europe on the negotiations with the NDF," Ms Macapagal said at a press conference at the presidential mansion.

"That's extortion and the police and the military have been instructed to enforce the law," she said.

The military has been documenting complaints from Luzon politicians that the NPA was collecting as much as P150,000 in "permit-to-campaign" fees. Only candidates who pay the PTC fees are allowed to campaign in areas controlled by the NPA.

Various groups have denounced the PTC fees imposed by the NPA. The rebels have said that all the candidates, including Ms Macapagal, must pay the fee.

The government panel raised the issue of PTC fees in Oslo, but no agreement was reached.

After four days of tough negotiations, both the government and NDF panels signed the "Oslo Joint Statement" amid smiles and warm embraces on Saturday morning.

The declaration calls on the United States, European Union, Canada and Australia "to support the efforts of the parties in resolving the outstanding issue of (the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the NPA, being on) the 'terrorist' listing."

The NDF had demanded that the Philippine government join it in its demand that the Western countries strike off the CPP and NPA from their list of terrorist organizations. The terrorist tag has hampered the rebels' ability to raise funds abroad, prompting them to step up extortion activities and attacks back home, according to the military.

US Embassy Charges d'Affaires Joseph Mussomeli said Saturday that Washington would remove the CPP and NPA from its list of terrorist groups once a final peace agreement was signed. But Mussolemi added the blacklist should not hinder the peace negotiations.

The communist rebellion is "not like al-Qaida or like Osama bin Laden," said Luis Jalandoni, head negotiator for the NDF panel.

"Our practice and our principles are those of a liberation movement like the ANC," Jalandoni said, referring to the African National Congress, the anti-apartheid movement of Nelson Mandela in South Africa.

"The biggest terrorists are those sitting in the White House," Jalandoni told Agence France Presse following the signing ceremony in Oslo. "Those carrying out state terrorism with so-called preemptive strikes, invading other countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, and bombing others like Yugoslavia."

From the government side of the negotiating table, however, Bello merely said that the question of the terrorist label "would be undertaken by both sides . . . but without prejudice to our existing foreign policy."

The two delegations have asked that Norway, the facilitator of their talks, "inform the international community about this common position."

The government and NDF panels also decided to create a joint committee to oversee the implementation of an agreement they signed in 1998 to respect human rights and international humanitarian laws.

The assassination of two human rights activists in Mindoro on Friday evening drove home the importance of having such a committee, Jalandoni said.

Next round

Bello said the next round of talks has been scheduled in March in Norway or even in the Philippines, with the Norwegian government acting again as third-party facilitator.

He said the government was no longer bent on having a final peace agreement signed before the May 10 elections.

But Bello remained optimistic that a final accord could be wrapped up soon should the bilateral working committees make substantial agreements in the weeks before the March talks.

"There's no major stumbling block, both panels are committed to the peace talks," he told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview from Kuala Lumpur where he stopped over on his way back to Manila from the four-day talks in Oslo.

The NDF panel secured the government's commitment on the indemnification of about 10,000 human rights victims during the Marcos regime, according to Bello.

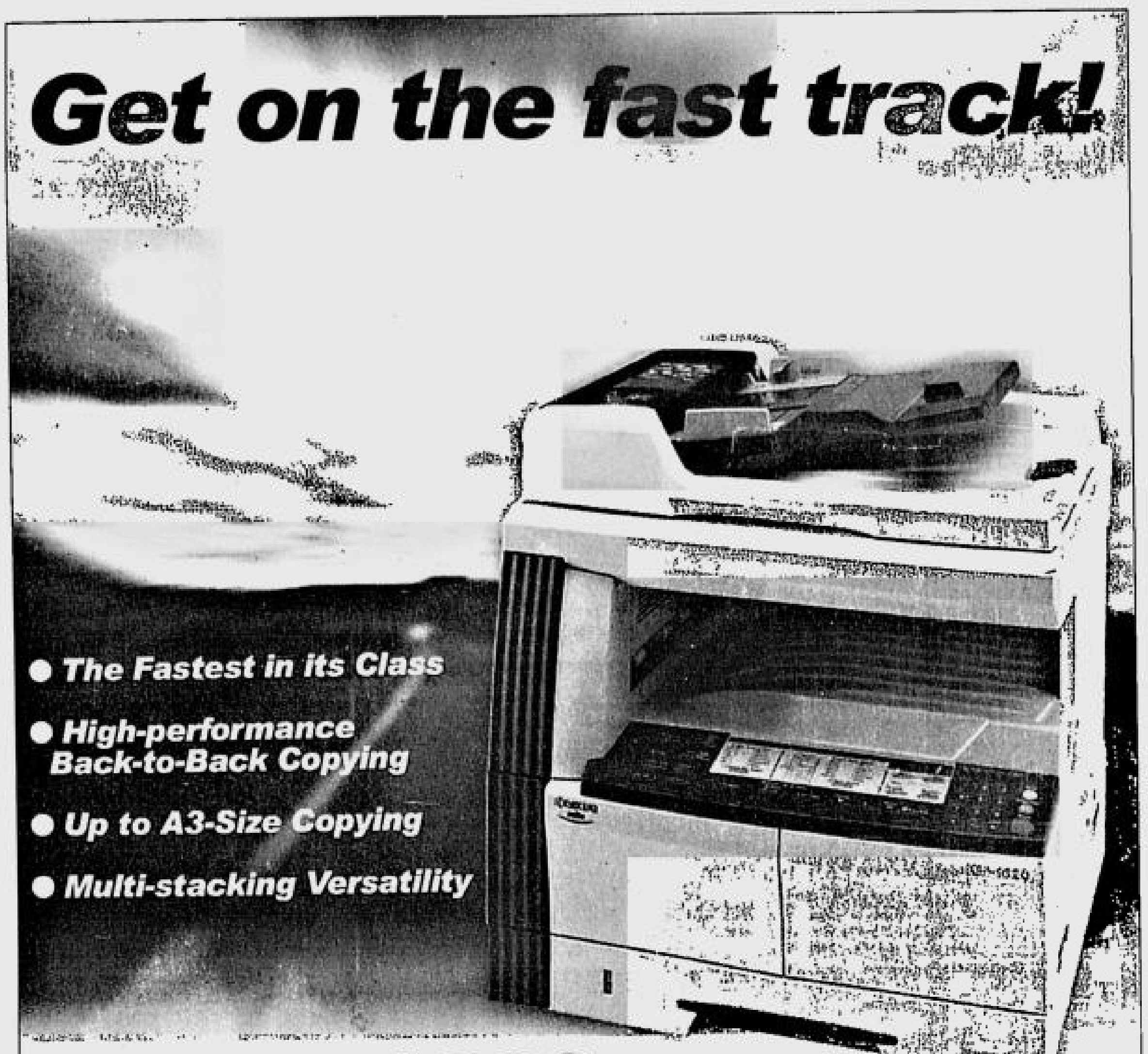
Hailing the Oslo talks as a "vital step toward peace," Speaker Jose de Venecia yesterday said that the House of Representatives had already earmarked an P8-billion compensation package for the Marcos victims.

The NDF also got the government to agree on the release of political prisoners as a confidence-building measure.

Working committees have been directed to discuss and draft an agreement on agrarian reform and national industrialization, after which another group would tackle political and constitutional reforms.

The last item, an end to hostilities, would be "easy to settle" once the first two issues had been agreed upon, according to Bello.

Peace talks were suspended three years ago, after the NPA murdered two legislators. *With reports from Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; AFP and AP*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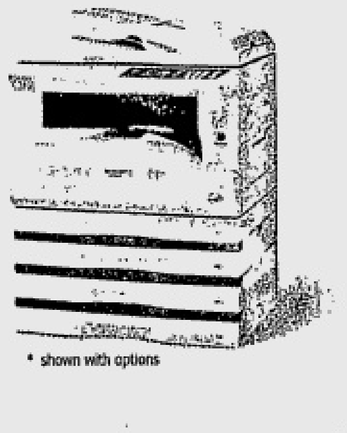

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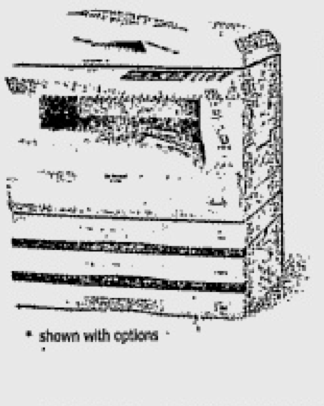

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Thai boy 20th bird flu fatality

BANGKOK—A 13-year-old boy has died of bird flu in Thailand, taking the death toll from the virus rampaging through Asia to at least 20, a health ministry official said on Sunday.

"He died last night of respiratory failure," Dr Charal Trinwuthipong, chief of the Department of Disease Control, told Reuters.

The virulent H5N1 bird flu has spread to eight Asian nations, killed 14 Vietnamese and six Thais and devastated the poultry industry.

The 13-year-old boy was believed to have caught the disease through contact with sick chickens, officials said.

The other Thai deaths—four boys aged between 6 and 7 and a 58-year-old woman—are also thought to have had contact with infected poultry.

Fears persist that the bird flu virus could combine with a human flu virus to become a deadly disease that can spread among people. Now there are concerns the virus may have leapt to exotic animals.

Thai officials say a clouded leopard in a zoo near Bangkok died of bird flu last month, but it was not yet clear whether the H5N1 virus was responsible.

The animal died on Jan. 27 at Kaokiew Zoo, 60 km east of Bangkok and had had no contact with chickens, Environment Minister Prapat Panyachatraksa said on Friday.

If confirmed, experts say it could be the first case of avian influenza in such animals.

"If it is true, there have been no reports of these kinds of animals succumbing to bird flu," Prof. Malik Peiris, an avian influenza expert at the University of Hong Kong, said on Sunday.

Experts say the virus, which has forced the slaughter of some 80 million birds in the region, mostly in Vietnam and Thailand, is probably spread by migrating birds.

The United Nations has warned Asian countries not to relax in the war on a bird flu virus because the epidemic was still spreading in Cambodia, China, Indonesia and Laos.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has stressed that poorer Asian countries had neither the resources nor the organization to eradicate the fast spreading H5N1 virus, reflecting the fears of experts that it could flare again.

Thailand has slaughtered 30 million poultry to eradicate the virus and says it is killing the last birds in its last epidemic zone.

With an eye on its embattled $1 billion-a-year export trade in chicken, Thailand is pressing overseas customers like Japan and Europe to test its birds for the virus in an effort to shorten import bans that had devastated the industry.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, whose government was accused of an initial cover-up of the outbreaks, said he expected the country to be clear of bird flu by the end of the month.

"There are only yellow zones and by the end of the month, bird flu should be cleared," Thaksin said in a weekly radio address on Saturday. *Reuters*

SNOW IN JERUSALEM REUTERS

A man walks in heavy snowfall outside Jerusalem's Old City Feb. 14. A rare heavy snow storm hit the Israeli capital causing severe traffic jams.

New oil shock could buckle economies

WASHINGTON—The global economy has withstood more than a year of high oil prices since the Iraq war preparations began, but analysts warn another price shock would slam on the brakes.

Danger signals would flash if prices breached $40 a barrel, economists said, though the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries was unlikely to let things deteriorate so far.

Freezing US winter conditions, lower US commercial crude oil inventories and supply interruptions sent prices of light sweet crude above $36 a barrel last month—the highest since President George W. Bush geared up for war in Iraq.

After falling back, supply concerns again pushed New York's benchmark contract upward Friday, sending light sweet crude for delivery in March up 58 cents to $34.56 a barrel.

"It does not look like the oil price will go down any time soon and that is in part because of the dollar depreciation—Opec wants to maintain their purchasing power," said Wells Fargo Banks chief economist Sung Won Sohn.

Opec members agreed Tuesday to cut output by about 10 percent by April 1, supporting world crude prices despite skepticism in the market about the cartel's ability to carry out its decision.

The impact of the high oil prices on the economy had been muted so far, Sohn said.

"It is like a tax increase, but we have had a tax cut so the effect of the higher price of oil has not been really severe," Sohn said.

Higher oil prices had not repeated the cycle of the 1970s and 1980s, when they accelerated a wage price spiral, leading to higher inflation, the economist said.

But "the worst possible combination is that the price of oil goes up to $40 or $45 a barrel—that could really break down the US and global economies," Sohn said.

"I don't expect that, but that is one thing that we worry about," he added. "Hopefully, Opec is smart enough to understand that if we go into recession it does not help them." *AFP*

Vietnam War returns to haunt America's presidential race

By Patrick Anidjar

WASHINGTON — Three decades on, the Vietnam War has returned to haunt the US presidential campaign, pitting a decorated combat veteran against an incumbent president embroiled in a controversy over his own military service.

US Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, aged 60 and favored to win the Democratic Party presidential nomination, won the Silver Star and Bronze Star for valor in Vietnam and received three Purple Hearts for wounds.

President George W. Bush, three years Kerry's junior, never went to Vietnam.

Instead, he chose to fulfill his military obligation by enlisting in the Texas National Guard as a fighter pilot, which was perfectly legal, but is nonetheless viewed by some veterans as a copout from serving on the battlefield.

Beyond that, Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe has accused Bush of going absent without leave from the National Guard.

The charge is tied to a murky period in Bush's National Guard record in 1972-73 when his whereabouts have not been fully documented. There is however no evidence Bush was absent without authorization.

The White House has produced Bush's National Guard pay slips and other records for the period in question, claiming they show him to have been present and accounted for.

But the presidential press corps has been relentlessly dogging White House press secretary Scott McClellan for more proof, in an incessant feeding frenzy that has overshadowed most of his briefings.

The White House made public a 2.5-inch-thick stack of documents Friday from Bush's time in the Texas National Guard in its latest effort to quash the charges.

But the records released on Bush's order are unlikely to quell charges from Democrats that he shirked his duties.

Kerry, who enlisted in the navy in 1965, has made Vietnam a central campaign issue, vexing Republican efforts to portray the Bush administration as the sole guardian of national security.

On the campaign trail Kerry routinely surrounds himself with fellow Vietnam veterans, one of whom he saved from certain death in the Mekong Delta.

Both men find themselves campaigning against the backdrop of another war, Iraq, as controversial and divisive as was Vietnam.

Each has been trying to sell the electorate on his patriotism, character, sense of duty and leadership qualities. *AFP*

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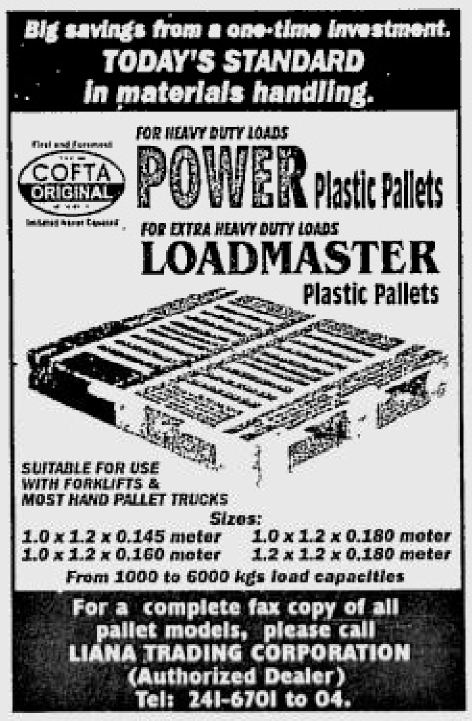

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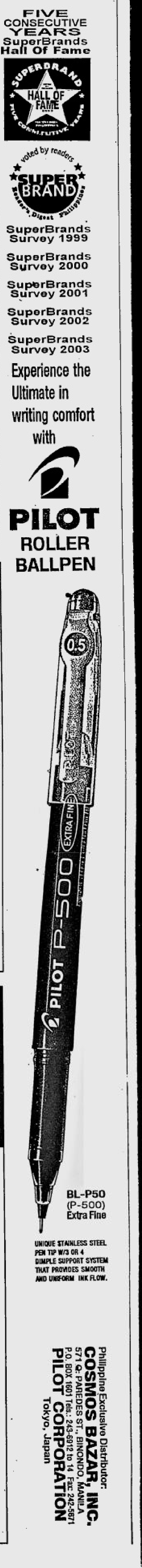

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24 killed as snow-heavy Moscow roof collapses

MOSCOW—Rescuers used their bare hands to search for survivors on Sunday after the glass roof of a popular Moscow swimming complex collapsed under the weight of snow, killing at least 24 people and injuring more than 100.

With the temperature at minus 20 Celsius (minus 4 Fahrenheit), giant heating machines were brought in to blast the site with warm air in an effort to keep trapped survivors from freezing to death.

More than 420 people were in the area where the roof caved in, showering them with shards of glass, and a total of 1,300 visitors were in the entire complex, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov said. It was unclear how many remained trapped under the debris.

Local media speculated that the cause of the tragedy might be poor construction. They said prosecutors had opened a criminal investigation into whether the roof collapse was caused by failure to fulfill "professional obligations." A spokesman for Russia's Emergencies Ministry said that the death toll from Saturday night's accident had risen to 24, including at least four children, and that 110 people were injured. Doctors said most of the children were treated for severe lacerations.

Hundreds of rescue workers were still searching for survivors more than 12 hours after the roof of the two-year-old building collapsed. Workers removed the rubble piece by piece over concerns they might injure survivors.

"The collapse is very extensive, work will continue for some five hours more," Itar-Tass news agency quoted one rescue worker at the scene as saying after dawn on Sunday.

Rescue workers were still hearing cries for help from under the wreckage of the aqua park in the southwest of the city.

"The rescuers are guided by people's voices and their calls for help sounding from these spots. Periodically, once in half an hour, 'minutes of silence' are observed in order to locate the victims under the wreckage," Tass quoted an official from an emergency crisis center set up after the incident as saying.

Panicking swimmers, some in bathing suits, rushed outside into freezing temperatures after the glass dome caved in at 7:20 p.m. Moscow time.

"It has been definitely confirmed it was not an act of terror," the mayor told reporters outside the complex in south-western Moscow. "The moment when the roof caved in was recorded by video cameras." Moscow has been on edge since a bomb ripped through a packed metro train on Feb. 6, killing at least 40 people. President Vladimir Putin,. who faces re-election next month, blamed Chechen rebels for the attack.

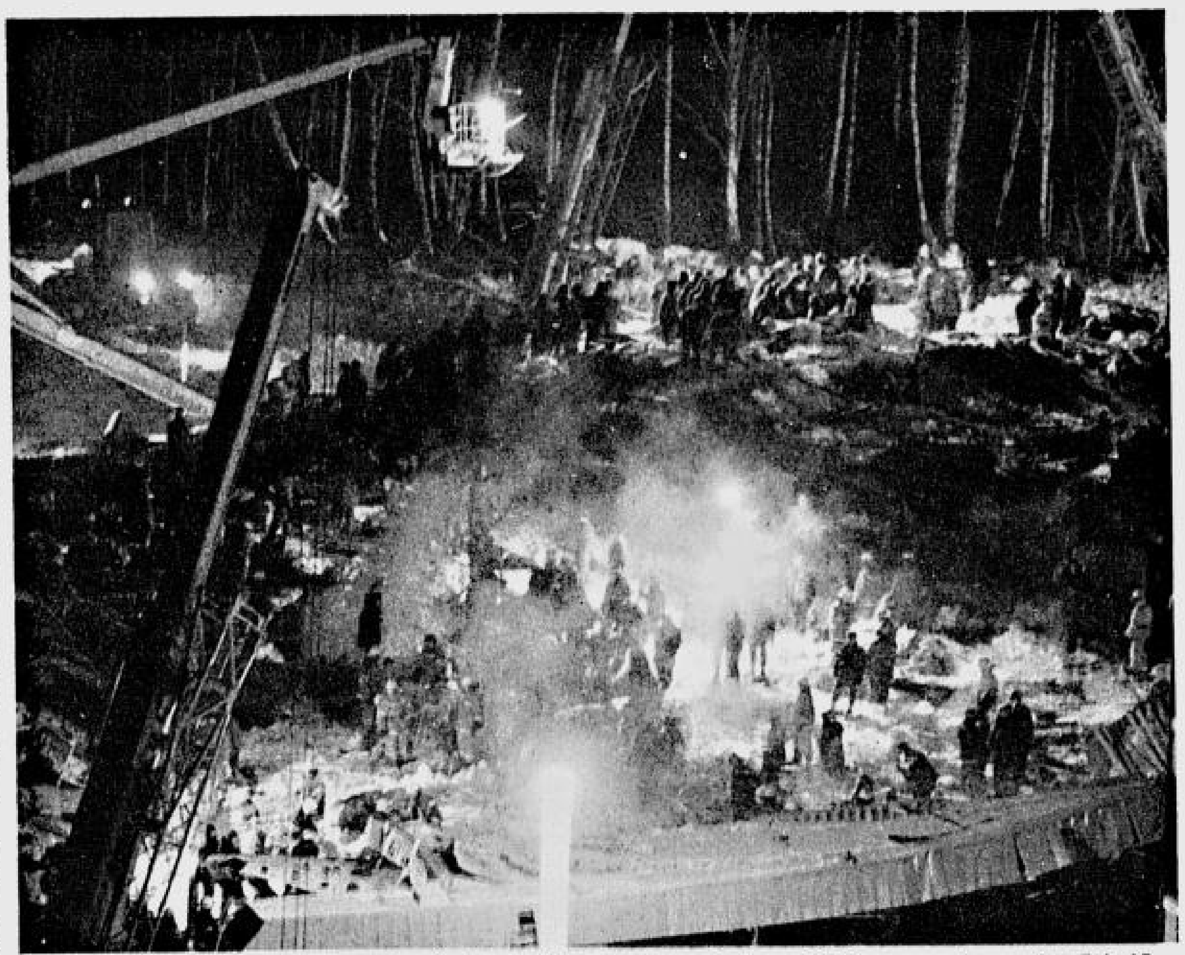
A Moscow police spokesman said part of the roof collapsed under the weight of piles of snow which collected on top of the giant glass dome after days of heavy snowfall.

Dozens of people, many children among them, were rushed to hospitals with fractures, brain concussion and bruises while rescuers strained to hear cries for aid from under the debris.

Hundreds of people were evacuated into the street shortly after the accident and relatives of those injured or possibly trapped soon joined them, shivering in an icy wind.

Moscow Prosecutor Anatoly Zuyev told reporters law enforcement agencies had begun an investigation of the accident.

The complex, widely advertised around Moscow, can take up to 2,000 visitors and has three pools, including one for children, and a river-like wave pool. *Reuters*



RESCUERS work among the debris after the Transvaal water park roof collapsed in Moscow, early morning, Feb. 15. The vast glass roof covering the Transvaal water park collapsed Saturday evening. AP

Asia's dirty air can hop to US West

SEATTLE, Washington—Though each country regulates its own air quality, the fact is that pollution knows no boundaries, and dirty air from Asia can easily hop the Pacific to pollute the western United States, experts here say, in calling for a global pollution solution.

Jet stream-driven pollution from Asia can cross the ocean in a matter of days, with dramatic effect on the quality of air on the US West Coast, Daniel Jaffe, an environmental specialist at the University of Washington, Friday told the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The starkest effects of this transpollution, he said, are an increase in the levels of ozone and fine particulate matter, well over limits set by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Asian pollution can cross the Pacific on winds fed by a low pressure system over the Aleutian Islands off southwestern Alaska and a high pressure system near Hawaii in mid-Pacific, the combination of which propels Asian air masses to the US West Coast on experts call "a high-speed conveyor belt."

"It's gone from a geophysical curiosity to a point where we can now say that, 'Yes, this occurs at large-enough levels occasionally that it can affect our air quality'," said Jaffe.

Nives Dolsak, an international relations specialist at the University of Washington, said pollution generated in one country increasingly impinges on neighboring countries, but in some cases, countries thousands of miles away.

"There is no one magic solution to international environmental problems," she said. "I believe actions need to be taken at all of these levels." Nives pointed to a current collaboration among Japan, South Korea, the United States and Canada to monitor pollution levels in China to predict when harmful pollution can impact on other countries, and to alert the concerned governments. *AFP*

Sweden may offer abortion haven to foreign women

STOCKHOLM—While many countries debate whether abortion should be legalized, Sweden, which already has one of the world's most liberal abortion laws, may loosen restrictions even further by allowing non-residents access to the procedure.

The Scandinavian country has since the mid-1970s offered free abortions up until the 18th week of pregnancy—no questions asked—making it one of the world's most liberal countries on the issue.

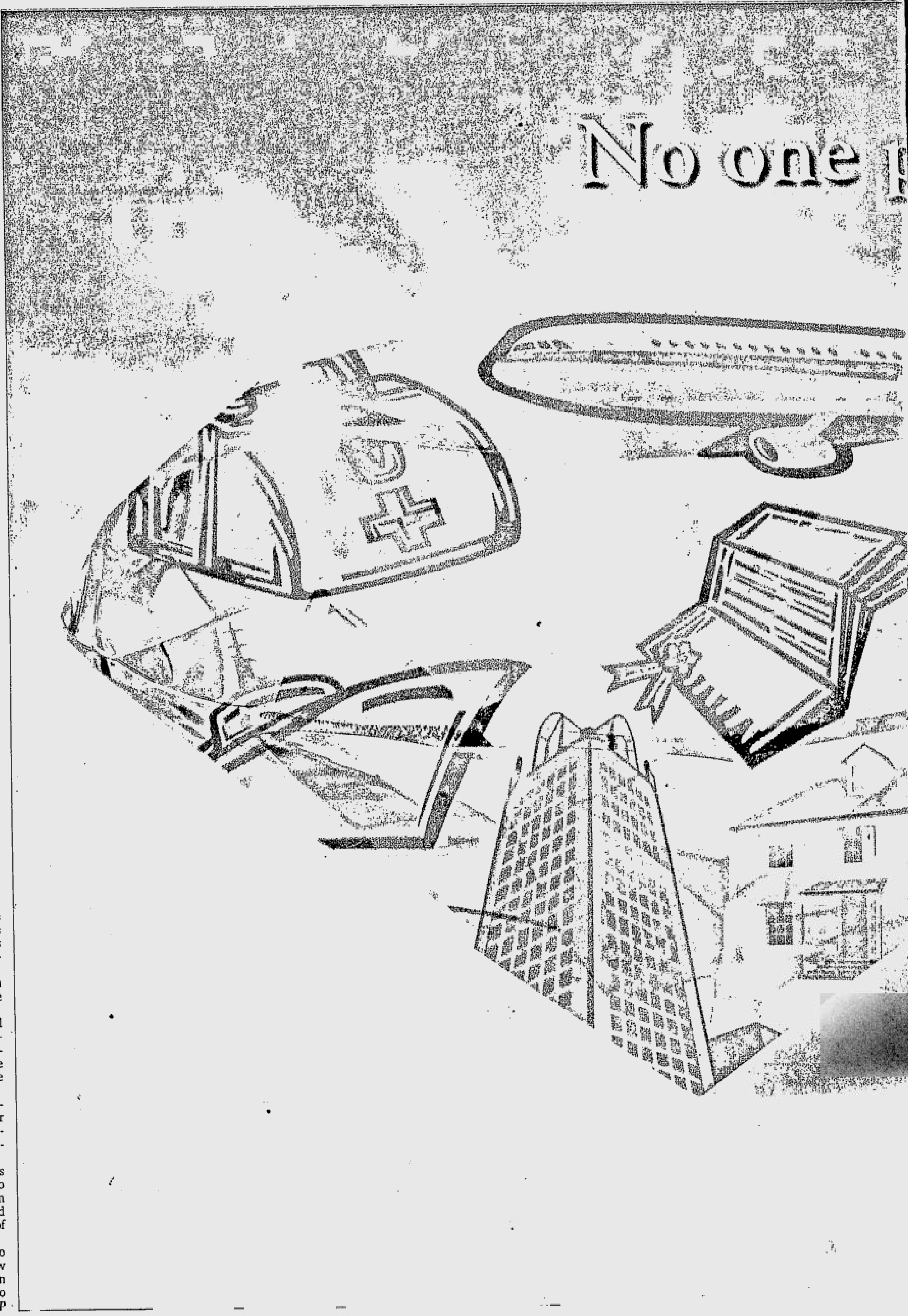
All of Sweden's Nordic neighbors, which are also considered liberal on the issue, have set the limit for abortions at 12 weeks.

But since access to the procedure has, until now, been reserved for Swedish citizens and residents only, critics maintain the law is still too restrictive, and several government ministers have recently pushed to give non-residents the same right to abortions as women living in Sweden.

"I think this question is of the utmost importance. I feel that the right to decide over your own body is a human right that should be accorded to foreigners as well as Swedes," Gender Equality Minister Mona Sahlin told AFP.

Before Swedes had access to legal abortions at home, many desperate women travelled to Poland to get the procedure done there, Sahlin pointed out, adding the liberal laws in Poland at that time had helped speed up the process of liberalizing the laws in Sweden.

"One of the reasons we finally decided to permit abortions was that we realized how hypocritical it was to ban them here, and then look the other way as girls went to Poland to get them," she said. *AFP*



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China store fire kills 51; dozens hurt

BEIJING—Fire swept through a department store in northeastern China on Sunday, killing 51 people and injuring dozens more, an official and state media reported.

The blaze started on the second floor of the five-story building, the government's Xinhua News Agency reported. It said 71 people were injured. The cause was under investigation.

"It was an especially large fire," said Fang Wanyou, a government spokesperson in Jilin, a city about 950 km northeast of Beijing, where the fire broke out.

He said many of the dead were sales clerks and that firefighters were among the injured.

The fire, in the Zhongbai Building, was reported at around 11:20 a.m., Xinhua said. Fang said it was unclear why the fire spread as quickly as it did.

Since it was a Sunday, the store was likely crowded with shoppers. Shopping has become a major pastime in China, which is newly flush with consumer goods as its economy shakes off decades of communist planning, and growth soars.

But China remains a dangerous place, and accidents with alarmingly high death tolls are common. Less than two weeks ago, 37 people were killed in a stampede in Beijing during a festival celebrating the last night of the Lunar New Year holiday. In December, a gas well blowout in the western region of Chongqing killed 243 people—leaving whole villages strewn with bodies.

About 260 firefighters took four hours to extinguish Sunday's blaze, Xinhua said.

State television showed smoke billowing from the building, with flames visible through its broken windows and its rooftop sign completely charred.

The building's upper floors housed a bathhouse, a billiard parlor and a disco, Xinhua said, although the fire began in the part of the building that offered shopping.

Fang said there also were restaurants in the building. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Kerry scores again

WASHINGTON—Sen. John Kerry cruised to easy wins in Democratic Party presidential caucuses in the western state of Nevada and the US capital on Saturday, crushing his rivals in the battle for the right to face George W. Bush in November. The 60-year-old, four-term senator from Massachusetts polled 47 percent of the vote in Washington DC and 63 percent in Nevada, the gambling hub where he was the only candidate to make campaign appearances. Civil rights activist Al Sharpton finished second in Washington with 20 percent of the vote, followed by former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean with 17 percent and North Carolina Sen. John Edwards with 10 percent. Former front-runner Dean, who is staking his dwindling hopes on Tuesday's crucial primary in the northern state of Wisconsin, finished second in Nevada with 17 percent followed by Edwards with 10 percent. Kerry has won 14 of the 16 nominating contests held so far and is looking to deliver a potentially fatal blow to his rivals in the Wisconsin primary, which he is heavily favored to win. *AFP*

Aristide ouster sought

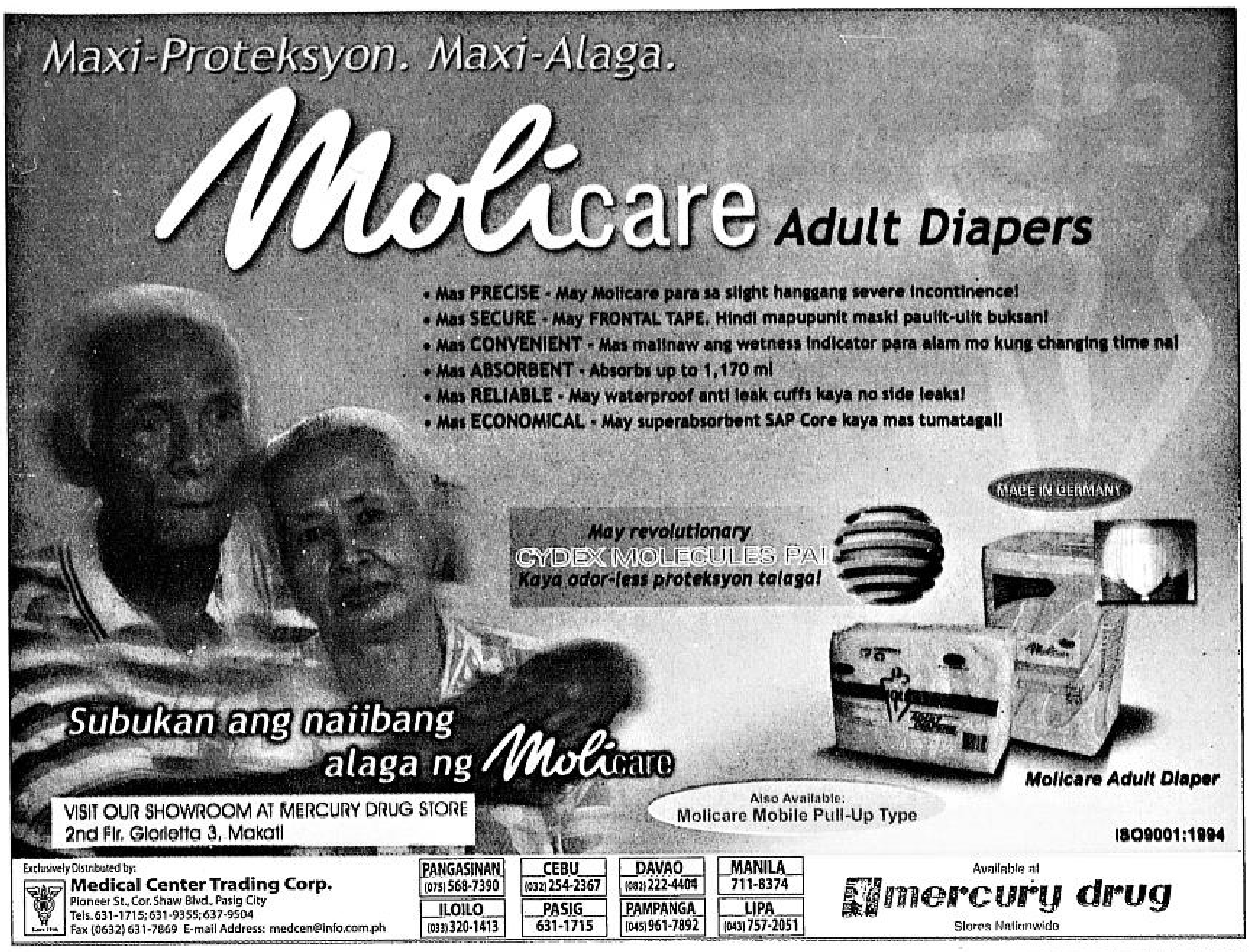
PORT-AU-PRINCE—A fired police chief and a paramilitary leader have joined an armed rebellion against embattled Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide, imperiling food supplies, officials said Saturday. The new alliance makes more real than ever the threat that Aristide could be deposed for a second time. About 50 people have been killed since troubles began last week after Caribbean leaders failed to persuade a weakened Aristide to cede power and avoid bloodshed. Rebels took Haiti's fourth-largest city of Gonaives, where they were joined by former police commissioner Guy Philippe, fired after a 2000 coup attempt against Aristide, and paramilitary leader Louis Jodel Chamberlain, accused of human rights violations under military dictator Raoul Cedras who was in power in 1991-1994. *AFP*

20 die in Pakistan quake

PESHAWAR—Twenty people died and dozens were injured after a powerful earthquake and aftershock hit northern Pakistan on Saturday, interior ministry officials said. More than 100 homes collapsed in Pakistan's North West Frontier province after the quake measuring 5.7 on the Richter scale hit at 3:30 p.m., followed by an aftershock measuring 5.5. The earthquake's epicenter was 200 km northeast of Peshawar, capital of the province bordering Afghanistan, seismologists said. "Some 20 people have died, including 10 in a passenger van when it was caught in a landslide in the northern town of Batgram," said Brig. Javed Cheema, head of the ministry's National Crisis Management Cell. *AFP*

Chechen leader's death

DOHA—The leadership of the tiny Gulf Arab state of Qatar has taken direct charge of an investigation into a car blast that killed former Chechen President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, an official said on Saturday. The unprecedented step underlined concern such an incident, which Qatari media said was an assassination, could occur in a country which prides itself on its security. It was not clear what caused the blast, which hit as Yandarbiyev, a separatist guerrilla leader linked by Moscow to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida group, left a mosque after prayers on Friday. Two people with him died and hospital officials said his 13-year-old son suffered extensive burns. Rebel Chechens blamed Russia for Yandarbiyev's death, while Moscow and pro-Moscow Chechens said it resulted from an internal feud amongst the separatists. *Reuters*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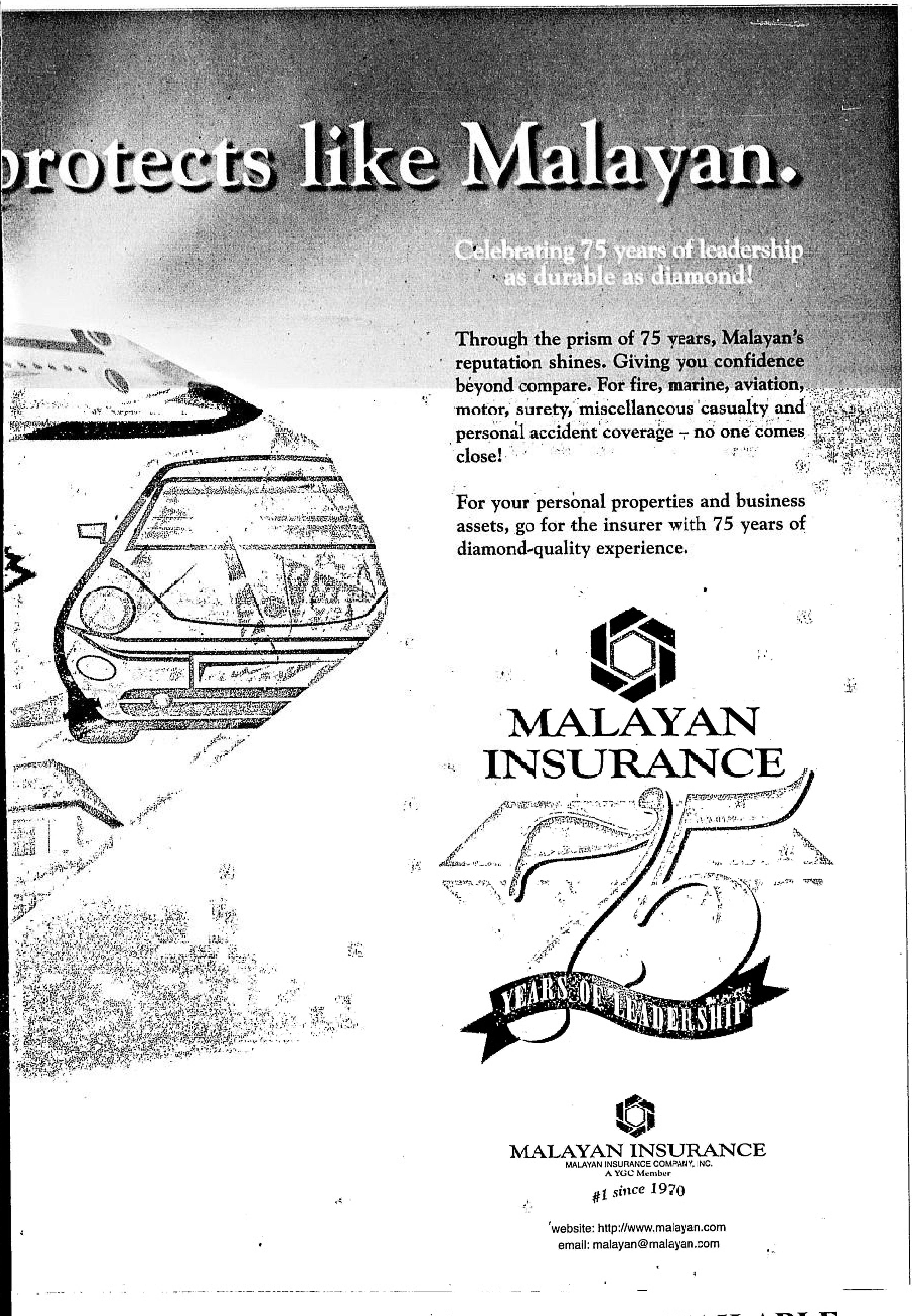
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Disqualified

EDITORIAL

IF a single series of statements is enough to disqualify a candidate for high office, opposition coalition standard-bearer Fernando Poe Jr. would need to find an immediate replacement for ex-secretary, ex-senator, ex-rule of law advocate Francisco Tatad. Granted, political rhetoric in the middle of a campaign is overheated, and Tatad, one of the senatorial candidates on Poe's Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino ticket, is one of those verbally gifted politicians who can be counted on to raise the temperature.

But his latest utterances on the campaign trail, aired in Mariveles, Bataan, have clearly crossed the line between mere sensationalism and sanity. After the Supreme Court invited four *amici curiae* to comment on the citizenship cases filed against Poe, Tatad claimed to see a conspiracy. "We are afraid that they are preparing the stage for something sinister."

Tatad, who famously read the proclamation of martial law on television in September 1972, is not a lawyer, but surely he knows enough about the law to know that an invitation to eminent lawyers to serve as the Supreme Court's "friends of the court" is a hallowed tradition. Only last November, the high court listened to oral arguments presented by some of the country's best lawyers on the vexing impeachment of Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. To suggest that the Supreme Court's invitation to four prominent lawyers last week was part of an elaborate scheme to justify an adverse decision already reached is therefore the height of irresponsibility.

He prefaced his remarks with weasel words that, properly analyzed, means his sourcing was triple hearsay at best. "There are reports to this effect that justices have been overheard to have said that they are ready to proceed against our candidate." Tatad's act of imagination violates a cardinal rule of fiction: the audience must be willing to suspend its disbelief. A cabal of justices saying out loud that they will vote "against" Poe, overheard by more than one opposition witness? This sounds like the fiction that Tatad's former master, the dictator and arch-lawyer Ferdinand Marcos, actually wrote all the books he was supposed to have written. Or that opposition leader Sen. Edgardo Angara has conducted the first open-and-shut inquiry in the Senate's history. It's simply too convenient to be true.

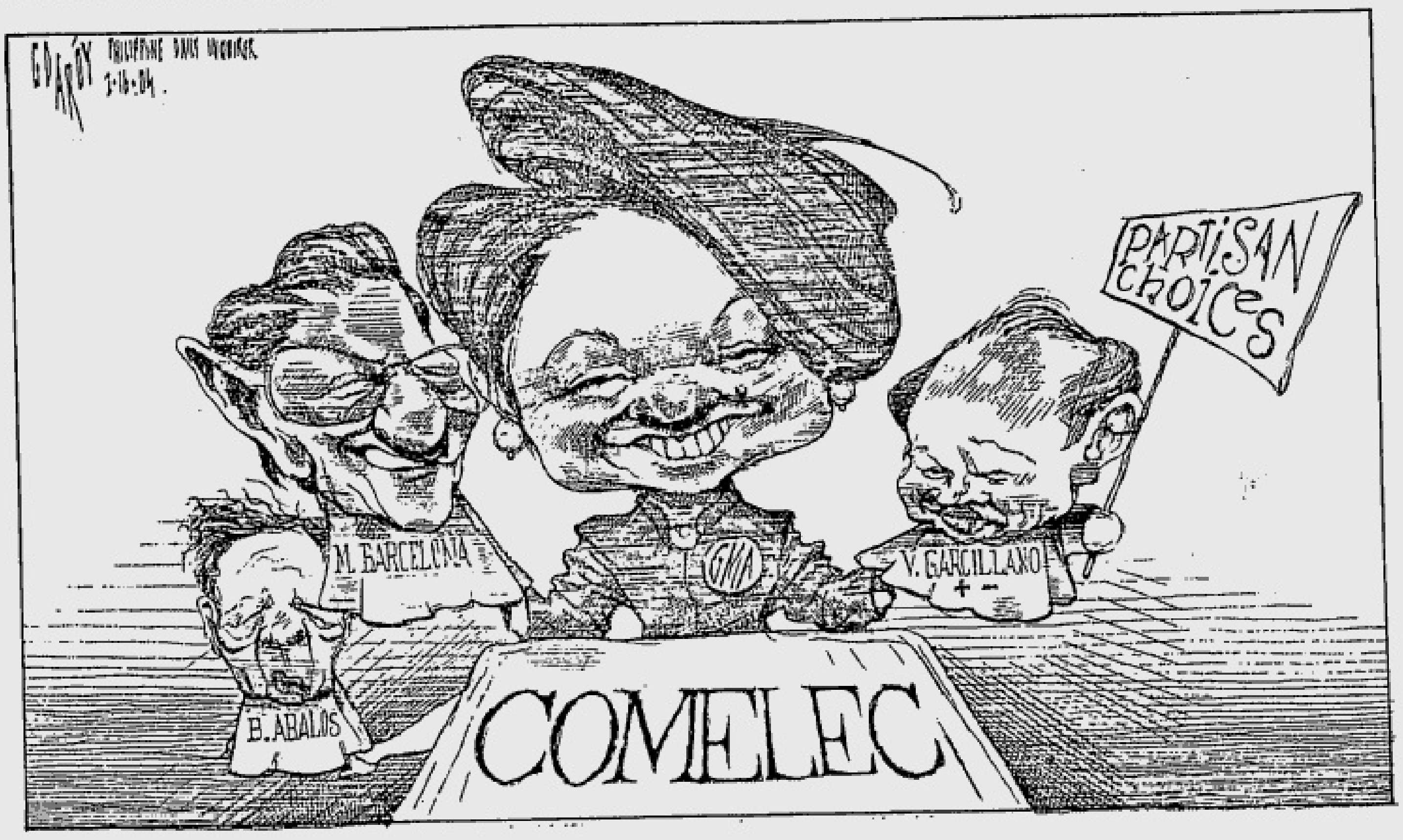
In another interview in Bataan, Tatad said the opposition "cannot accept and we will not accept" a decision disqualifying Poe. He also told reporters: "I hope the justices of the Supreme Court, for the first time in three years, will follow the law and be an instrument of peaceful electoral process rather than something else." What he means is that, ever since the Supreme Court ruled unanimously, in two landmark cases, to confirm the legitimacy of the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, he and other loyalists of deposed President Joseph Estrada do not accept the legitimacy of the high court itself. If the Supreme Court itself does not "follow the law," then why would a man like him follow the court?

But—and like any self-taught, self-made man for whom circumstance is stronger than conviction, there is always for Tatad the inevitable but—if the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Poe, he and that part of the opposition he represents would accept the ruling.

The hypocrisy in Tatad's position is breathtaking. The rule of law requires every citizen, among other responsibilities, to heed judicial decisions whether these are favorable or adverse. To follow only those that favor us is to encourage contempt for the law and then, inevitably, to court lawlessness itself.

That is, in fact, the scenario that Tatad sketched in Bataan for anyone to hear: "I would not be able to predict anything because I don't believe the masses who have expressed intense support for FPJ will take this sitting down." And yet again: "If we are deprived of our presidential candidate due to reasons which I believe are totally unacceptable, then we would not be in a position to impose our will on our people in the grassroots."

Blackmail, in other words. It is the last resort for those who have run out of arguments. It is also the latest proof, but not the last, that Tatad has disqualified himself from ever serving in a republic.



A formula for chaos

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

IT does sound like "political blackmail," but we shouldn't take lightly the warning that civil disobedience and anarchy may erupt if opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. is disqualified. Common sense says that we shouldn't join such mob actions, but remember that it is the numerous *masa* who will be very emotional and lose common sense and control if their idol is disqualified. After all, they think they have nothing to lose and everything to gain in case of anarchy. And it does seem unfair if their idol is barred from the presidential race by reason of technicality. Fernando Poe Jr., after all, has lived and worked all his life in the Philippines as a Filipino, was a qualified voter during all that time, and the Filipinos accepted him as such without question. But now that he is a very popular presidential candidate, and seemingly on the verge of winning, he is suddenly a non-Filipino.

As comedy king Dolphy quipped during FPJ's proclamation rally, "*Kaya ayokong kumandidato, baka bigla akong maging Intsik* (That's why I don't want to be a candidate, I may suddenly become a Chinese)!"

It is certain that the firebrands in the opposition will take advantage of the mass anger to foment anarchy. And there are elements in the military who are waiting for just such an opportunity; and, surely, the communist and Muslim secessionist rebels. Furthermore, Filipinos have learned they can depose sitting presidents with "people power." In fact, it has become a habit with them. So we can expect more people power putsches—or even worse. Even the Supreme Court justices may be at risk, considering the extreme anger that a disqualification decision will create among FPJ supporters.

But the law is the law, and the justices will decide the case as they think the law intends. And so if they decide against FPJ, we have a formula for chaos.

But I don't buy the rumor that the GMA-appointed justices have already decided for disqualification even before they have heard the oral arguments and read the learned opinions of the "friends of the court" they have invited. And although I am not a lawyer, I am confident that the high court will throw out the appeals and petitions for disqualification because the facts, the law and jurisprudence are heavily in favor of FPJ.

What's more, the evidence presented by the Fornier brothers was ruled by the Senate committee that investigated the case as manufactured and falsified. The brothers have not been able to prove otherwise. In short, there is no evidence to speak of against FPJ. In fact, the senators have recommended the criminal prosecution of National Archives director (on leave) Ricardo Manapat for "falsification of public documents."

But the lawyers who went up to the Supreme Court are using the evidence presented by FPJ's lawyers themselves—the marriage certificate of his parents, and FPJ's birth certificate. These show that FPJ was born before the marriage. Therefore, they argue, FPJ is illegitimate and takes the citizenship of his mother, Bessie Kelly, who is an American. Ergo, FPJ is an American and not a natural-born Filipino and is therefore not qualified to run for president of the Philippines.

FPJ's lawyers argue that his grandfather, a Spanish citizen living in the Philippines, became a Filipino by virtue of the Treaty of Paris, and the Philippine Bill of 1902. Therefore his son, Fernando Poe Sr., FPJ's father, was a Filipino. Ergo, FPJ himself is a Filipino.

But FPJ was born out of wedlock and, therefore, being illegitimate, he cannot take the citizenship of his father, argue the petitioners.

Yes, but the subsequent marriage of his parents made him legitimate. Even if the marriage comes after the birth, legitimacy retroacts to the date of birth of the child, according to the law and jurisprudence. In case of doubt, legitimacy is decided in favor of the child because the laws were made precisely to protect the innocent children.

Furthermore, the 1935 Constitution which was in force when FPJ was born, provides that a child born of a Filipino father takes the citizenship of his or her father. It does not distinguish between a legitimate and an illegitimate child. Therefore, a child with a Filipino father is a Filipino, whether or not he or she was born out of wedlock.

But of course the Supreme Court can rule otherwise. It can even reverse itself. It is said that lawyers, and especially justices, can make a straight line crooked and a crooked line straight, or make white look black and vice versa. That is why there is so much conflict in the world, why court dockets are clogged, and why lawyers get rich. The laws and jurisprudence are confusing and contradictory and need lawyers and judges to interpret them. The law is, finally, what the Supreme Court says it is—even if it contradicts an earlier decision.

And there lies the danger.

* * *

The three-day deadline imposed by the Commission on Elections for national candidates to remove their illegal posters, streamers and billboards expired yesterday. K-4 vice-presidential candidate Noli de Castro beat the deadline by removing his giant billboard at the corner of Edsa and Quezon Avenue. But the billboard of independent senatorial candidate Heherson Alvarez beside it is still there.

And illegal posters are still everywhere, including those of President Macapagal-Arroyo which are nailed, not pasted or tied, to trees around the Quezon Memorial Circle near the Quezon City Hall. What are the Comelec and Metro Manila Development Authority doing?

Sword of Damocles

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

THERE is one, a sword of Damocles. I just don't know on whose head it hangs.

The seemingly obvious target is Fernando Poe Jr. I too heard the rumors last week, the Supreme Court has already voted on the question of his nationality, and voted against him, though by a slim margin. The Supreme Court has of course vehemently denied the rumor, saying it's nowhere near a decision yet. But I would seriously urge the justices close to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, chief of them Tony Carpio, to inhibit themselves on this case. Their participation in it, however rationalized, will stoke the fires of unrest.

FPJ has obviously heard of the rumors, too, and has taken a combative stance. "They are mistaken in what they are doing to me," he said in a campaign rally last week. "If they persist in it, they may not see the light of day." He said this, of course, in his favorite language, Filipino, the language of his movies, the language of his audience, the language of his country, except Cebu. The language of, well, whether it is the land of his birth or not, that is the question.

I don't know that he will be cited for inciting the people to rebellion. I heard a couple of pro-administration officials on TV, whose names I did not get but who I gathered were men of the bar warning Estelito Mendoza and company against fomenting rebellion by their incendiary comments. Apparently, Mendoza et al. have been warning that a negative ruling by the Supreme Court on FPJ's citizenship would drive the people to the streets. That was tantamount to sedition, the men of the bar said.

Well, now they have the words straight from the horse's—or the Panday's—mouth. "*Baka hindi na sila sikatan ng araw*" is not a very veiled threat. The people who are eager to oust him with questions about his nationality can always try to oust him with charges of sedition, too.

But, first, is there a possibility the Court will dare bar him on the ground of nationality?

Clearly this case is not just a legal one, it is also—indeed primarily so—a political one. It's so for several reasons. Not the least of which is that it is being decided right smack in the campaign period, and right in the face of FPJ leading the pack, to go by recent surveys and the state of his hands. The last are being frayed by handshakes. No matter how you slice it, a decision against FPJ will be seen as a political ploy engineered by GMA and executed by his minions in the Supreme Court. I myself will believe it, my faith in the institutions of society, not least of them the Supreme Court, having gone out of the window long ago. This Supreme Court above all, where lurk GMA appointees.

There are of course the legal or constitutional aspects of the issue. But at the very least, even high school students know from their textbooks that the law and the Constitution themselves rest on tradition, common sense and the sovereign will of the people. That was how GMA came to power in the first place, that is why we recognize her as President. Notwithstanding that she replaced a constitutionally sanctioned president, one impregnably backed up by an overwhelming vote. Erap had lost his right to rule by virtue of gross abuse of authority, the people had spoken at Edsa.

We go by the letter rather than the spirit of the law, why on earth should we recognize Gloria? Indeed, we go with the spirit of the law as well, why on earth should we recognize Gloria? She has flouted the very thing that put her in power.

It is tempting to think that the GMA camp will just let the issue hang on FPJ's head rather than resolve it one way or the other, because the threat is more powerful—or less dangerous—than the execution. But I personally would not put it past this government to go for broke. GMA has upped the ante on practically everything: she has lied about not running, she is ransacking the treasury to cling to power, she has appointed a couple of notorious characters and known supporters as Comelec commissioners, she has (if Kawal is to be believed) ordered her generals to make life hell for the other candidates. Why should she balk at getting rid of FPJ this way?

That presumes of course that the Supreme Court can be swayed to Malacañang's way of thinking. I have little doubt it can.

That's the scary part. Some friends have speculated that the Erap-FPJ camp isn't exactly associated with "people power"—"Edsa III" was a travesty of one—and does not have a hold on the restive military officers. So its capability to mount popular protest of the kind that brought down Marcos and Erap is suspect. True, but there's another factor that makes the situation explosive, and that is that GMA isn't the most popular person to inhabit Malacañang. She was facing popular unrest before FPJ declared his intention to run and threw the country into election mode, quite apart from challenges from potential mutineers. You combine FPJ's popularity with GMA's unpopularity, the same Star Wars storyline about rebellion and empire, underdog and overlord, that presaged both Edsas, you've got a combustible mix.

I repeat: I do not want FPJ to become the president of the country. I do not think he is qualified for the job. But I do not want him screwed in this way because the consequences for this country will be horrendous. My desire to see some candidates win ends where my desire to see fair play begins. The process is more important than the individual, how the candidate wins is more important than who wins. The public sees that an injustice has been done—and this is an injustice—God help us. Marcos liked invoking the law to foment injustice, and look where it got him. Well, look where it got us.

There is a sword of Damocles dangling in the air. It hangs on all of us.

Valentine reconciliation

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

MEDIA reports had predicted that politics would play a big role in the 99th homecoming of the Philippine Military Academy alumni last Saturday. Happily the prediction did not come true, as the politicians seemed conscious of the roles they had to play, doubtless remembering the booing incidents that affected some candidates in past homecomings. President Macapagal-Arroyo attended it, not as guest speaker but as an adopted member of Class '78, accompanied by her husband First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, himself an adopted member of the silver jubilarian Class of '74. Thus, while GMA was given full courtesies as commander in chief, gamely trooping the line on foot and not aboard the customary ceremonial jeep, she did not deliver the keynote speech; that role was assigned to Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita who was the guest of honor. In fact, GMA was not heard at all that morning except to swear in the new members of the PMA Alumni Association.

* * *

The homecoming would have gone well but for one wrinkle. Maj. Gen. Edilberto Adan, PMA superintendent and reunion host, in acknowledging the presence of VIPs missed out some. Aside from the First Couple, he mentioned former President Fidel Ramos; Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, who led this year's PMA awardees; former environment secretary and now independent senatorial candidate Heherson Alvarez, adopted member of Class '67; Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza of Class '62; former Defense Chief Angelo Reyes of Class '66; and a number of other dignitaries. But he did not name senatorial candidates Mar Roxas, former trade secretary and an adopted member of Class '74; and Orlando Mercado, former senator and defense secretary.

But the more serious omission was the failure to acknowledge presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Class '71. People in the grandstand quickly noted it. Media reports later quoted Adan as saying he simply forgot to check whether Lacson was around, but some were quick to tag it as a snub by GMA; when chances are, she may not have been aware he was among the many hundreds spread out in the parade ground. Considering the sensitiveness of such an oversight, Adan should have been more thorough in verifying Lacson's presence.

* * *

Lacson, natty in a grey morning suit, had his fill posing for photos with families of the alumni in the field, while GMA, dressed in the barong outfit of her adopted class, had her own share accommodating some jubilarians at the grandstand. But that afternoon she made up for her lack of opportunity to meet with more alumni when she hosted a cocktail party for them on the sprawling grounds of the Mansion House, before retiring to her summer residence for a private Valentine dinner with her husband. I noted that GMA is now much more relaxed with the military crowd than ever before, warmly greeting people and posing for photos; in her extemporaneous talk she recalled the prominent role PMA alumni played in past governments and now in her own administration. But toward the end she didn't hold back. Noting that "after all it's campaign season already," she exhorted the alumni "not to forget the elections on May 10," but stopped short of asking for their vote.

* * *

At the grandstand, former Army Chief and Defense Secretary Fortunato Abat, Class '51, quietly sat in the middle part, his presence ignored by Adan. Abat recently made news again when he led a number of signatories in a full-page ad in this paper exhorting a no-election scenario and the setting up of a civil-military junta to replace the current government. Two days earlier he had complained about how the military authorities had cancelled the ceremonies to mark the death anniversary of his son Tito at the camp named after the latter. But the bigger surprise was that the aging general showed up at GMA's cocktail party and when she arrived, he seemed to have set aside his seditious advocacy and rose to meet her and embraced her warmly. GMA sweetly smiled back at him. They were the cynosure of all eyes, and Secretary Ermita later opined to this columnist that it cannot be anything but a "Valentine reconciliation."

* * *

In his address, Ermita recalled the role that the country's premier military institution played in his own life as well as in the lives of its countless alumni—"changed forever" by the Philippine Military Academy in a "transformation total and complete." Ermita pointed out that many alumni had distinguished themselves not just in the military realm but also in the civilian sphere, even as he urged them to continue to help in the task of nation-building at this "political crossroads" of our history. He reminded the alumni that they are "military professionals whose orientation and mind-set is to serve our country and people," and who must continue to act with relevance to the life of the nation by being the "key stabilizing force of Philippine society." But Ermita couldn't help but jab at the "destructive handiwork of the raiders of democracy," some of whom, he noted, arose from the hallowed institution itself.

He reminded the alumni that their key role as the nation's stabilizing force may be put to its "acid test" once again in a few weeks, as the people face the elections in May. Our job, he stressed, is "to safeguard the electoral process and ensure the stability of our country. The Armed Forces will defend and keep this republic together. But in the end, perhaps, with his boss in mind but without articulating her name, the defense chief exhorted the alumni: "Don't forget to vote. And vote wisely."

New cultural find in Butuan

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

THE MAN is a law unto himself. That is probably one of the worst that can be said of anyone, let alone a government official aspiring to become a member of the Philippine Senate. That was probably the most scathing remark yet made about senatorial candidate Dick Gordon in the uproar over the Lapu-Lapu statue recently put up at Rizal Park.

Gordon has since answered the charges made against him by INQUIRER columnist Ambeth Ocampo, who is also the chair of the National Historical Institute. But the fact remains that a law of the land, in this case Presidential Decree 1505, remains such until otherwise repealed or amended, a detail that must not escape any senatorial candidate.

Gordon probably timed the installation of the controversial statue for his Senate try. But what perfect timing as well that this has to happen when Filipino voters must discern the actuations of government officials, who after allegedly breaking the law, aspire to become lawmakers. But what the heck, our elections are a carnival anyway, and with all the political prostituting going on, nothing shocks us anymore.

Heritage advocates, and Gordon for that matter, can take note, however, that there are bright spots in heritage advocacy, and that happens only when local governments follow the law on heritage protection.

Missing the eye of our election-fixated media was a recent prehistoric find in Butuan City that, as is usual for heritage-rich Butuan, sets another paradigm for close private sector and government collaboration.

The Bonbon Shell Midden is a mound of shells running up to two meters deep occupying an area of about half a hectare in Barangay Bonbon, Butuan City. Not far from it is another mound, although smaller. At the moment, materials found in the site are undergoing radiocarbon dating analysis in Japan. But National Museum archaeologists who recently made an in-depth study of the site are of the tentative prognosis that the materials go back to Late Stone Age. That effectively pushes back in time the cultural chronology of Butuan's early settlement, and eventually alters data on Philippine history. It is thus an exciting find.

The precious find, however, stands in the way of "progress" for those who wish to make it appear that development and culture are in conflict with each other, that one must give way to the other. The planned Butuan circumferential road, which is already in the final planning stages, will pass right through this Midden site.

When the Butuan Historical and Cultural Foundation sounded the alarm of the possible mutilation of Midden, the city government promptly communicated its concern to the engineering team of Nippon Koei. And with funding from the city government—how fortunate Butuan's historians are!—the foundation called in the National Museum to do the test drills. With the archaeological work now completed, and the road design altered to save Midden, the danger of its destruction has passed, but "just in time," says Butuan historian Greg Hontiveros, whose landmark publication, "Butuan of a Thousand Years," will soon be out on the book shelves.

The National Museum team found out that the site is not a natural formation. Aside from freshwater and brackish shells, the excavations yielded stone flake tools that bore traces of human interventions, including deposits of human and animal bones. At the moment, two human tibiae (long bones of the arms) and parts of the hand are in Japan for C-14 analysis.

Our good news from Butuan doesn't end with the diversion of the road and the museum's findings. The city is soon to inaugurate its new City Library building where the local government and Rep. Leovigildo Banaag have assigned a room for the planned Butuan Historical Studies Center.

The center will house a collection of books and research materials that will surely be useful to visiting scholars and researchers. Already, the initial volumes include the private research materials of Vic de Jesus on the Magellan expedition which are all sourced from abroad. Also from European libraries and archives are Spanish documents gathered by Fr. Joesilo Amalia, and some out-of-print books which have significant data on Butuan. The library will also contain studies on Butuan done these last three years, including the geomorphological study of the Butuan delta. There will also be copies of all archaeological studies of Butuan and other Mindanao sites.

As one can see, it is not only Butuan's prolific historians who are setting the example here, but also local government officials appreciating highly the valuable contribution of heritage education to the development of people. True, the officials are only doing their duty, but with the numerous violations by some government people (encouraged by the apathy of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo from whom, after being sounded out on the Luneta misadventure, not a whimper was heard), Butuan's example puts many to shame.

"Tourism means jobs. *Maraming trabaho para sa Pilipino.*" Those campaign slogans are true. But development must not only be all economics. Culture can be a powerful partner to economics and hence, can energize development efforts. What better development there can be than Filipinos having better education on and understanding of their own identity and heritage? Culture is as essential to people as food and jobs are.

How we wish there is such a thing as a heritage vote in the coming elections. Wow Butuan!

* * *

Comments to monta@sni.ph

The risks of democracy

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

I HAVE heard serious, bright and sincere people talk about instituting restrictions on the right to suffrage. The argument goes that an electorate that is increasingly uneducated and politically immature needs to be purged. The idea is that this will give a chance for skilled and competent leaders to make a difference and improve everyone's lives, including the lives of the poor. Better fed, and better educated, and eventually, less poor or not poor at all, a reinvigorated citizenry could then be given back the vote, and everyone will be happy. If this view was just being peddled by elderly, reactionary and wealthy people it wouldn't surprise me. What surprises me is that this view isn't all that rare among members of our entrepreneurial class, in particular people my age, who don't remember life before martial law but are old enough to remember the parliament of the streets of the early 1980s.

This is a dangerous and offensive way of thinking, and what is more, it is completely unrealistic. When it comes to suffrage, the only way to turn back the clock is to establish a dictatorship, and all dictatorships are temporary in nature. The right of suffrage is like water; once you open the floodgates, it is difficult to contain. It can be done, but at what cost? Environmentalists will tell you that dams often do incalculable harm to nature.

If, as Napoleon said, an army marches on its stomach, the electorate votes on its stomach, too. Hence, "gut issues." In a country where a significant percentage of the population is poor and uneducated, the concerns of the percentage of the population for whom hunger is the paramount concern of their lives, and for whom everything seems impossible, are what will determine the outcome of elections. Both the elected leaders and dictators of Rome understood the fundamental requirements of leadership when they maintained their popularity—and thus, authority—by giving the Roman masses, or plebes, bread and circuses. A fed (and not even well-fed) people are a calm people, but it is not enough to keep people from being hungry. Humans are people because they have imagination, and the imagination must be fed, even as the animal part of us is kept content by having enough to eat.

Perhaps the wealthy and middle classes have learned to divorce imagination from leadership: this may explain why so many businessmen and executive types seem so boring and humorless. But seriously, what I mean is that leadership, among our entrepreneurial, business and academic classes, is defined more by measurable skills than by personal characteristics such as charisma and humor. The result is that effective, capable—deserving—leadership is measured according to two widely different scales by these classes and the majority who don't belong to the elite (my definition of our elite is very catholic: anyone with a managerial position and above, or who is a professor or a journalist, belongs to the elite, which is why it amuses me to see people who belong to the professions rail against the elite, because they're ranting about themselves).

How else do you explain the enduring popularity of, say, Fidel Ramos and the enduring infamy of say, Joseph Estrada among the wealthy and middle classes? Consider that there is the fairly prevalent view among the members of those classes that both men are crooks that outclassed Ferdinand Marcos. If someone assumes both men are crooks, and yet pines for the days of Ramos and doesn't regret the fall of Estrada, the only conclusion I can draw is that some crooks are more reprehensible than others, the kind of hypocrisy that precisely bothers the poor. Logically, you would expect our "best and brightest" to hate both, if they truly hate crooks.

Anyway, the larger point is that there is obviously a difference in the way our business and academic leaders measure the "proper" kind of leadership the country needs, which is why Ramos, intelligent, efficient, humorless and uninspiring, remains popular among them, while Ramos was never popular with the broader public; and why Estrada, emotionally but not intellectually intelligent, openly a man of vices, but with humor and the common touch, continues to be held in affection by so many.

The strength of the main contenders for the presidency indicates that the public is looking for intelligence, efficiency, determination, the common touch and strength of will, in our leaders. I believe the surveys reveal an informed choice—informed, that is, according to the natural inclinations of various segments when it comes to how they measure leadership. Those who value experience and hard work gravitate toward the President; those who expect leaders to protect property want Sen. Panfilo Lacson; those who value intelligence and put a premium on integrity want Raul Roco; those who want a leader they understand prefer Fernando Poe Jr.

The risk of having a democracy is that it is all about numbers. I'm skeptical about the poor comprising only 40 percent of our population. But if that's the case, the 1998 election results validate what I've long held: the supposed thinking and allegedly competent classes still outnumber the poor that so frighten those classes. The thing is, the poor have more in common with each other than the educated, middle class and rich have in common with each other: they may represent 60 percent of voters, but it is a 60 percent too smart, in a sense, for its own good.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

Wrong info about former DOJ head

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

HAVING a surname similar to that of a public figure can be problematic. People mistake you for your popular or notorious (depending on the circumstances) namesake. The confusion with surnames that have the same spelling or ring sometimes afflicts the media.

Last Feb. 5, the INQUIRER reported on its front page ("High court scolds Nani's law partner") the Supreme Court's reprimand of lawyer Marcial O.T. Balgos, the examiner in the 2003 bar exams in commercial law, for negligence in the handling of the test questions assigned to him that year.

The leakage forced the tribunal to disregard the results of the examination in commercial law. It later readjusted the allocation of the percentage points attributable to that subject to the other seven law subjects.

The lead of the news described Balgos as "a law partner of former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez." The succeeding paragraphs made references to his standing as senior partner of the Balgos and Perez law office.

A lawyer from Digos City, Davao del Sur, questioned the manner by which the report was made. He wrote: "As a daily PDI reader, I have this to say. Yes, tabloids do it. But a respectable broadsheet like PDI should be above unnecessary sensationalism, such as your Feb. 5 headline. It was totally unfair and unessential to tag former DOJ Secretary Hernando 'Nani' Perez in the bar exam imbroglio.

"In fact, nowhere in the body of the article is Nani even implicated, whether directly or indirectly. Yet, it was his name that was splashed on the headline. Atty. O.T. Balgos is widely known enough in legal circles to have carried the headline. Why include Nani who, at last count, is not even an accountable public official anymore? Surely, we readers expect more from PDI than this."

Wrong person

When asked to comment on the complaint, the editor in chief said Balgos may be known in the legal circles, but outside of that "who's he?" By identifying him as former Justice Secretary Nani Perez's law partner, the readers instantly get an idea of who he is. That he is a big-time lawyer who should have known better than do the act that he was reprimanded for by the tribunal.

She further explained that Balgos has not been accused of any crime—just negligence in leaving his computer open to downloading by just about anyone who had access to his room.

Unfortunately, the news in question is inaccurate. Balgos is not a law partner of Nani Perez. The latter resigned from the law office in 2001 when he was appointed to the justice department by President Macapagal-Arroyo. He did not resume his professional ties with his former law partners after he quit the Cabinet in 2003.

The "Perez" in the "Balgos & Perez law office" mentioned in the news refers to Edna Bonto-Perez, not to Nani Perez. The former is a labor law expert who worked for years at the National Labor Relations Commission before engaging in the private practice of law.

Had the reporter who wrote the news made an effort to look up the telephone directory and call the law office to verify the facts, he would have learned of the true identity of that "Perez" and avoided the error in identification.

And even if Nani Perez were a law partner of Balgos, I think it was inappropriate to mention his professional relationship with Balgos in reporting the disciplinary action subject of the news. As correctly pointed out by the reader, there was nothing in the report indicating that Perez had something to do, one way or the other, with Balgos' failure to safeguard the integrity of the test questions he prepared for the 2003 bar exams.

Labels

The fact that Balgos does not enjoy the same level of public recognition as Perez does not justify the latter's inclusion in the report. The story about Balgos and the culpability of the members of his staff who leaked the questions to some examinees was newsworthy enough without having to bring Perez into the picture. The inclusion of Perez's name did not add anything to the substance of the news.

I concede that there are times when "labels" or reference to past associations cannot be avoided when the newspaper reports on the activities of some public figures. The additional description gives the readers a better understanding or appreciation of the acts or statements subject of the news.

It is essential, however, that the labels used are relevant or have a bearing on what the public personality is reported to have done or said. Failing in that standard, the news report would look like a gossip item.

Thus, if the subject of the news is the unexplained wealth of a high-ranking government official during the martial law years, reference to his close association with the late President Ferdinand Marcos during those dark days in our history is justified. Its omission would make the news incomplete.

Following the same principle, it would be improper to mention lawyer Estelito Mendoza as the justice secretary and solicitor general of Marcos in a news report about Mendoza's handling of the disqualification case against presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. Mendoza's past services to Marcos have no relevance or materiality to his present legal services to Poe.

For the reasons stated earlier, the INQUIRER apologizes for the error. It regrets whatever wrong impressions the story may have caused the affected parties and the readers.

* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

THEY SAID

Malacañang guest

"I think the reason I chose (to work here) instead of in Malacañang was that I knew I was just a guest. I would not be here forever; my role was very temporary."

—Former President Corazon Aquino on her decision to stay in Malacañang's Guesthouse rather than in the main palace

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LETTERS

Signs of corruption in a media person

THIS refers to your interesting editorial, "Media nation." (PDI, 2/2/04)

To your question: "Does the media have the power to determine who the country's next president is?" my answer is a big Yes.

We know that candidates and their handlers will spend huge amounts of money to win the elections, including corrupting media people, particularly in TV and radio.

You don't have to be an expert to know that when TV and radio people mention not once but many times the names of some candidates, this is an indication that the broadcasters are on the payroll of the candidates. That is why, there should also be a lifestyle check on media people.

In Australia and many countries, there is no such thing as envelopmental journalism. This is because all journalists get the same pay from all the newspapers, TV and radio stations. That is, one pay for all who belong to the same rank/position/experience. And they all belong to one media labor union.

Print media people, particularly columnists, can easily be detected if they are on the payroll of candidates/politicians. They mention their names almost every time in their columns.

—OSCAR R. LANDICHO,
2 Goodenia Court,
Voyager Point,
NSW 2171, Australia

The press and the strong republic

THE PRESS—print media—should do its part in the building of a strong republic.

The news report, "3 men in cop uniform pull off robbery" (PDI, 1/25/04) of Edson Tandoc Jr. was a case of irresponsible reporting. The 10th paragraph of the article read as follows: "But investigators could not yet ascertain if the three robbers in uniform were just pretending to be cops, or were actually policemen."

With all due respect, I submit that the paragraph was not necessary to complete the news report. It just exacerbated the negative image of the police. The very few men in uniform who find their way outside the law enjoy this kind of reporting to the great prejudice of the many who have devoted their lives in zealously protecting the citizenry.

Certainly, Tandoc's style of journalistic reporting will not help in the building of a strong republic.

—LUIS A. ILAGAN JR.,
7 Kalipulako St., Lipa City 4217

THE 10TH paragraph Luis Ilagan Jr. referred to in his letter was integral to the story.

The story was about 10 men—three of whom were in police uniform with Caloocan City Police patches—who robbed a furniture factory. The logical question: How come they were wearing uniforms? The investigators were not sure. That's what I wrote in the 10th paragraph.

I included this information in the story because I did not want my readers to jump to conclusions. It is my responsibility to make things as clear as possible to my readers by not leaving loopholes in the story. Without that paragraph, I would have risked the possibility of some readers thinking the robbers in uniform were indeed cops, while others would be thinking they were not, when in fact nothing was certain yet.

I stand by my style.

—EDSON C. TANDOC JR.,
PDI reporter

my life.
my choice.
my future.

" I have many dreams. Like many girls my age, I dream of becoming successful, rich and maybe, famous. !! But dreaming is only the beginning, pursuing it is another thing. I know I want to go into business one day and that attending a college offering a good Commerce curriculum will help me reach my goal.

I think I' m lucky because I found the perfect school that will help mold my future."

- Sarah / BSC Major in Business Mgmt.

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The truth and law are on NHI side

THE DEFENSIVE and self-serving letter of Ma. Carissa O. Coscolluela, "Gordon is no lawbreaker," (PDI, 2/11/04) shouldn't be dignified with a reply but the half-truths peddled there need to be clarified to dispel the perception that our column "Gordon's latest folly" (PDI, 1/16/04) was inaccurate or unfair.

First, we didn't comment at length on the much criticized Intramuros Light and Sound Show out of *delicadeza* because our services, as consultant, were contracted by the Philippine Tourism Authority during the project's initial stages. Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon did not heed the suggestions made, verbally and in writing, to the creative group, thus, the National Historical Institute and I distanced ourselves from the project. Later, Gordon tried to hide under the skirt of the Ateneo History Department that disowned the show in its final form. (Letters 1/24/04) It is unfortunate that Gordon listens to no voice but his own. As an aspiring senator he should develop listening skills.

More pathetic is the attempt to make us share the blame for Gordon's misinterpretation of history. Gordon claims we could not be contacted. While we were abroad from April to November of last year, our e-mail as well as that of the NHI's continued to receive messages and calls. Our log will prove that Coscolluela was not doing her job. Why was she unable to contact us through e-mail, snail mail or land phone when Gordon's secretary "Girlie" and Undersecretary Evelyn Pantig always got through? Instead of shifting the blame to others, perhaps, Gordon should explain to the public why a project with an initial budget of P75 million ended up wasting P175 million with poor results.

Second, Coscolluela claims the controversial Lapu-Lapu monument on Rizal Park is legal because the NHI chair did not protest. PD 1505 is very clear to anyone who understands simple English. Any alteration on a declared historical landmark/site requires prior written permission from the NHI chair. We challenge Gordon to produce this basic requirement. He has three letters expressing the NHI's reservations; these cannot be taken as permission. On Jan. 5, 2004 Gordon was asked to stop.

The NHI welcomes a statue of Lapu-Lapu provided it is erected outside an area declared as a historic site. Gordon, like a squid, responded by creating a non-issue between the historicity of Rizal versus Lapu-Lapu. Lest we forget, Rizal is buried under the monument, this is why the park is dedicated to him and other martyrs who literally fertilized the area with their blood.

The NHI may not have the benefit of Gordon's PR machinery and uncritical staff who follow him blindly. All the NHI holds at the moment are the truth and the law. All the empty noise Gordon makes will not make his unwanted monument in Rizal Park legal.

—AMBETH R. OCAMPO,
chair, National Historical Institute, T.M. Kalaw Street,
Ermita, Manila

Stop name-calling

THIS is an appeal to stop name-calling by candidates and to raise the level of political discourse in the country's national and local elections.

The recent statement of Brig. Gen. Victor Corpus describing opposition vice-presidential candidate Loren Legarda as a "political prostitute" has made us, concerned women of Philippine society, realize that there is a need to campaign for sobriety and high ethical standards in the conduct of the forthcoming national and local elections.

The current low level of political behavior needs to be changed. Legarda does not deserve to be labeled as such. Well-informed sectors of our society know the senator to be intelligent and competent, gender-sensitive and responsible, a pragmatic-thinking person possessing effective negotiating skills, and known for her high level of performance as a senator of the Philippines.

Now, more than ever, Filipinos who have been deprived of a meaningful electoral process, should come together and raise the level of political discourse and conduct.

May we appeal to all concerned, especially to the political parties, candidates, campaign spokespersons, civil society organizations, the electorate, etc. to initiate a political discourse characterized by substantive platforms and national agendas.

We believe that the Filipino can think and are able to discern the truth, to separate the chaff from the grain, and be empowered in the process. We owe it to our country to do the best we can to mold a more mature citizenry and electorate. This is the only way the Philippines can come out strong on the road to development and prosperity.

—NELIA SANCHO, LIELA SALGADO, MARIBELLE BELLO-ESPINO, DIANA CUA, MONICA AVEO, CHERY COBARUBIAS, ARMITA RUFINO, MARYANN SALCEDO, Concerned Women for a Meaningful and Substantive Political Discourse,
cwmspd_2004el@eudoramail.com

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Roco allies threaten libel suit vs Biazon

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

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Lawyer Batas Mauricio, a senatorial candidate under Roco's ticket, said he would be filing libel charges against Biazon as his statement against Roco was aimed at destroying the credibility and name of the presidential candidate.

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Pastor to walk across RP for peaceful polls

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—On Valentine's Day, Cuban-American pastor Rev. Daniel "Danny" Garcia, known as the world's "Walking Man," started a month-long walk across the country to pray for peaceful elections and to seek God's guidance in choosing the country's political leaders.

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"I will be praying for His guidance in electing the right candidates. We need leaders who seek God and truly serve the people and not those interested in serving their selves first," said the 58-year-old pastor.

The proceeds of Garcia's walk for the PNRC will be used to buy an ambulance and support the various programs of PNRC, said Raul Garganera, PNRC administrator in Iloilo.

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Filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik's house razed by fire

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

NATIONAL **artist Kidlat Tahimik looks at the remnants of his house that was razed by fire yesterday.** TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

BAGUIO CITY—A four-story wooden house that was rebuilt by filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik after the 1990 Luzon earthquake in Barangay Tuding in Itogon, Benguet, was razed by fire on Sunday morning.

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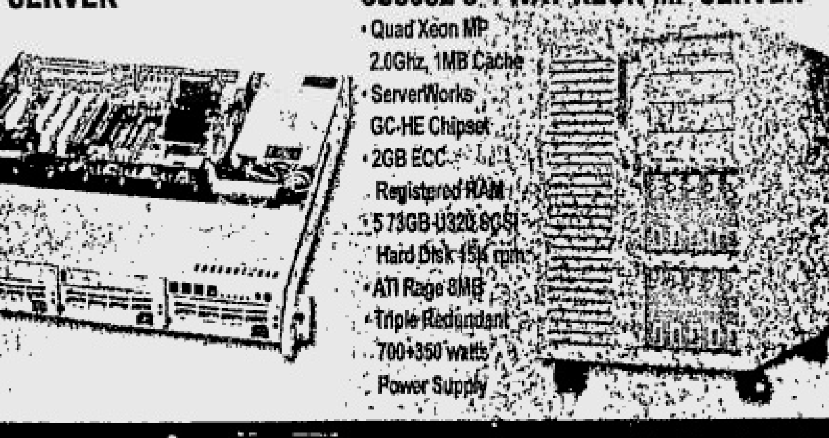

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Campaign funfare in Mindoro

CALAPAN CITY—The presence of senatorial candidate Bong Revilla provided funfare during the administration party's campaign sortie at the Provincial Capitol Complex here Friday where government employees, officials and a few outsiders formed the crowd.

"Ang pogi!" even married women would say. A handshake, a kiss, or a picture excited the cheering crowd. No doubt, movie celebrities, particularly those with good looks, have an edge over the other candidates despite the leaflets listing their credentials.

Such was the case of Pia Cayetano, a bar topnotcher and tourism secretary Richard Gordon, who provided campaign materials with their accomplishments at the back of their photos but were not given as much attention as Revilla.

Sen. Robert Jaworski was also a crowd drawer.

While the crowd waited for another celebrity, Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid, Jeric Raval distributed the governor's photos with a calendar on its back.

The itinerary of President Macapagal-Arroyo's slate was kept flexible and at times, unpredictable for security reasons. While there had been talks in previous days that Noli de Castro, a native of Pola, Oriental Mindoro was coming to campaign, nothing had been final.

Ms Macapagal was heard to be coming via Roxas town but arrived on a small plane through Calapan Airport at around 8:30 a.m.

An information officer in the Capitol said the President then proceeded to a closed door meeting with the police in its headquarters. Then she took a chopper to Roxas town.

A proclamation rally was held at the Jose Leido Memorial High School Gymnasium in the city where the other candidates, including De Castro, were expected to be seen.

While the Macapagal administration had been assisting the province in the past also because one of the cabinet members, Mocita Jimenez, is from Baco, Mindoreños said that FPJ is still the person to beat in the coming elections. "While Noli de Castro is a Mindoreño, it might matter if FPJ will strongly campaign for Loren," said some people from the crowd. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon*

DPWH personnel barred from wearing 'PGMA' shirts

DUMAGUETE CITY—The Commission on Elections has directed the Department of Public Works and Highways in Negros Oriental to stop its personnel from wearing shirts and accessories that bear the name of President Macapagal-Arroyo because this is tantamount to electioneering.

Provincial poll supervisor Rogelio Benjamin called the attention of Engineers Ricardo Duran, Rodrigo Catapusan and Florante Inut, heads of the first, second and third engineering districts respectively in a letter dated Feb. 10.

In his letter, Benjamin said DPWH workers were wearing t-shirts, hats and raincoats with prints that read "PGMA" while cleaning the roads under the government program "Kalsada Natin Alagaan (Let us take care of our roads)."

He said the words PGMA obviously refers to President Macapagal, who is seeking a full six-year term under the administration coalition K-4.

The billboards on the road project should also be removed because these contained the name of Ms Macapagal and could be considered campaigning, said Benjamin.

Appropriate charges would be filed against government officials and employees found violating the law, he warned.

"We respect the President. But since there is a law we should implement it, because nobody is above the law," he said in his letter.

Catapusan told the INQUIRER that he had forwarded Benjamin's letter to the DPWH regional office based in Cebu City for action.

Under the Fair Election Act, Benjamin said government employees are prohibited from engaging in partisan politics.

He said that under the law, the wearing of clothes and accessories that bear the name of any candidate is considered an act of campaigning.

Benjamin said that since the government pays these DPWH workers, they can be considered government employees, thus the prohibition applies to them. *Romy G. Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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Campaign funfare in Mindoro

CALAPAN CITY—The presence of senatorial candidate Bong Revilla provided funfare during the administration party's campaign sortie at the Provincial Capitol Complex here Friday where government employees, officials and a few outsiders formed the crowd.

"Ang pogi!" even married women would say. A handshake, a kiss, or a picture excited the cheering crowd. No doubt, movie celebrities, particularly those with good looks, have an edge over the other candidates despite the leaflets listing their credentials.

Such was the case of Pia Cayetano, a bar topnotcher and tourism secretary Richard Gordon, who provided campaign materials with their accomplishments at the back of their photos but were not given as much attention as Revilla.

Sen. Robert Jaworski was also a crowd drawer.

While the crowd waited for another celebrity, Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid, Jeric Raval distributed the governor's photos with a calendar on its back.

The itinerary of President Macapagal-Arroyo's slate was kept flexible and at times, unpredictable for security reasons. While there had been talks in previous days that Noli de Castro, a native of Pola, Oriental Mindoro was coming to campaign, nothing had been final.

Ms Macapagal was heard to be coming via Roxas town but arrived on a small plane through Calapan Airport at around 8:30 a.m.

An information officer in the Capitol said the President then proceeded to a closed-door meeting with the police in its headquarters. Then she took a chopper to Roxas town.

A proclamation rally was held at the Jose Leido Memorial High School Gymnasium in the city where the other candidates, including De Castro, were expected to be seen.

While the Macapagal administration had been assisting the province in the past also because one of the cabinet members, Marina Jimenez, is from Baco, Mindoreños said that FPJ is still the person to beat in the coming elections. "While Noli de Castro is a Mindoreño, it might matter if FPJ will strongly campaign for Loren," said some people from the crowd. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon*

DPWH personnel barred from wearing 'PGMA' shirts

DUMAGUETE CITY—The Commission on Elections has directed the Department of Public Works and Highways in Negros Oriental to stop its personnel from wearing shirts and accessories that bear the name of President Macapagal-Arroyo because this is tantamount to electioneering.

Provincial poll supervisor Rogelio Benjamin called the attention of Engineers Ricardo Duran, Rodrigo Catapusan and Florante Init, heads of the first, second and third engineering districts respectively in a letter dated Feb. 10.

In his letter, Benjamin said DPWH workers were wearing t-shirts, hats and raincoats with prints that read "PGMA" while cleaning the roads under the government program "Kalsada Natin Alagaan (Let us take care of our roads)."

He said the words PGMA obviously refers to President Macapagal, who is seeking a full six-year term under the administration coalition K-4.

The billboards on the road project should also be removed because these contained the name of Ms Macapagal and could be considered campaigning, said Benjamin.

Appropriate charges would be filed against government officials and employees found violating the law, he warned.

"We respect the President. But since there is a law we should implement it, because nobody is above the law," he said in his letter.

Catapusan told the INQUIRER that he had forwarded Benjamin's letter to the DPWH regional office based in Cebu City for action.

Under the Fair Election Act, Benjamin said government employees are prohibited from engaging in partisan politics.

He said that under the law, the wearing of clothes and accessories that bear the name of any candidate is considered an act of campaigning.

Benjamin said that since the government pays these DPWH workers, they can be considered government employees, thus the prohibition applies to them. *Romy G. Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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ARMM execs ink ₱900-M agreement for poor villagers

COTABATO CITY—Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Social Fund project officials and mayors of four war-ravaged towns in Maguindanao on Friday signed a P900-million agreement to empower poor communities in the region.

Francis Mancilla, ARMM social fund information specialist, said the agreement covers at least 600 villages of SK Pendatun, Datu Paglat, Buluan and Guindulungan towns to be developed this year.

Under the agreement, Mancilla said, the villages will be given P1.5 million for small-scale infrastructure and livelihood projects.

At the same time, the ARMM social fund project would ensure that project funds are released regularly.

The projects for each village would comprise water supply and irrigation, warehouses and dyers, school buildings and timber ports and road rehabilitation.

The ARMM social fund project, created in 2002 to help build a durable peace and reduce poverty in Mindanao's conflict-affected areas, has $33.6-million loan funding for five years from the World Bank.

The project's objectives are to promote intra- and inter-community partnerships among stakeholders who have been on opposing sides of the armed conflict in Mindanao; assist poor and conflict-affected communities with improved social and economic services; generate short-term, productive, and sustainable long-term employment; and improve local governance through improved transparency in decision-making and accountability for the use of public resources at the community level, the local government unit level, and at the level of ARMM. *Rosa-May V. de Guzman, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Drug dealers killed

SAN MATEO, Isabela—Two suspected illegal drug dealers were shot and killed in Barangay Dos here on Thursday. Insp. Hardy Urma, town deputy police chief, identified the victims as cousins Damaso and Marcelo Agraan. Urma said Damaso Agraan was twice arrested for possessing shabu and marijuana. He was freed last month after posting a P400,000 bail bond. The Agraan cousins were reportedly talking to their friends in the village when two men aboard a motorcycle arrived and shot them. ***Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

Best regional police

TUGUEGARAO CITY—The Philippine National Police cited the Cagayan Valley police as the best regional police office in the country in 2003. Chief Supt. Jefferson Soriano, regional police director, said the award was given to their unit due to their successful campaign against illegal drugs and robbery groups, the arrest of most wanted criminals and the increase in crime solution efficiency to 92.2 percent, among others. Soriano said police operations resulted in the reduction of drug-affected villages in the region from 211 to 22. He said the police also busted 13 crime syndicates last year. ***Estanislao Caldez, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

Tourists robbed

DAVAO CITY—Unidentified men robbed a visiting Japanese and an Australian in Tagum City on Wednesday, police said. Shigeshi Taneda, 59, and Michael Munstz, 50, of Mosman Park, Western Australia arrived here via Philippine Airlines on Wednesday morning. The two foreigners told police that a man who introduced himself as Bobby met them at the airport and that he already hired a van for their trip to Tagum City. Shigeshi and Munstz said they were traveling for more than an hour when the van stopped at a secluded place. There, at least seven persons, armed with a rifle, handguns and bolos, met them. The victims said the armed men immediately took their belongings and cash amounting to more than P200,000. ***Ferdinand O. Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Gas station attacked

BALIUAG, Bulacan—Armed men fired at a gasoline station here on Friday night, police said. No one was reported hurt. Police said the suspects could be members of a group trying to extort money from the owner of the JE Slicks gas station in Barangay Sabang here. Reports said the suspects, who were armed with M-16 Armalite rifles and on board a motorcycle, attacked at 7:30 p.m. Friday. Police said the group sent Juanito Roxas, 57, the gas station's owner, a letter demanding P100,000 and a separate P20,000 monthly protection money.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

3 robbers nabbed

SAN PABLO CITY—Police arrested three members of a notorious robbery gang operating in this city in a manhunt operation last week. The suspects, Michael B. Mercado, 27, of Barangay Guadalupe Phase 2; Percival E. Majarato, 26, of Barangay Sta. Monica and Cesar A. Glorioso, 22, alias Bato, all of this city, were caught with some of the loot they took from victim Federico D. Ruela of Colago Avenue, also of this city. The suspects, police said, also admitted responsibility for the robbery of the Seventh Day Adventist Church here in December 2003. The suspects are now detained at the district jail. ***Romulo O. Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

2 plays in UP Baguio

THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines Baguio-Committee on Culture and the Arts is mounting two one-act plays directed by Martin Masadao entitled "Ang Pinakamakisig sa mga Nalunod sa Daigdig" and "Nang Makilala Ko ang Prinsipe" at the UP Baguio Auditorium (Bulwagang Juan Luna), according to a UP Baguio press release. The play dates are on Feb. 16, 17, 19 and 20 with matinee at 3 p.m. and gala at 7 p.m. This is one of the major productions of Rambak Sining, a celebration of culture and the arts of the UP Baguio and the university's contribution to the Panagbenga Festival. Tickets are sold at P50 and P100 only. Tickets for group viewing will be sold at a discounted price. For details, please visit the Committee on Culture and the Arts, UP Baguio, or call tel. no. 444-7645.

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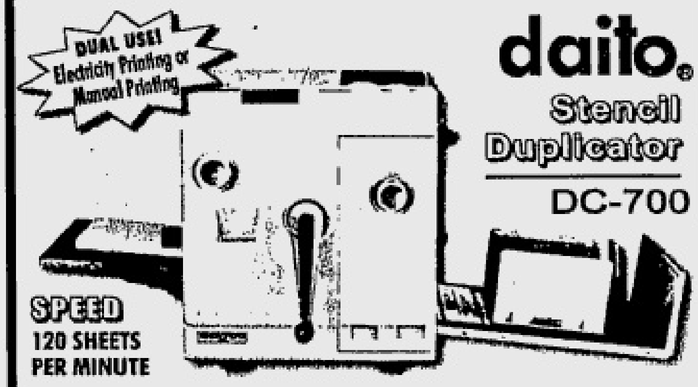

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4th Prize Winner

The masterpieces of these top five talented young individuals will grace the covers of the 2004-2005 PLDT-DPC telephone directories, after emerging as the five winners in this year's competition.

Admire their award-winning renditions of this year's theme: The Filipino Youth Making a Difference, at the Ayala Museum, Makati Stock Exchange Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City from February 4-29, 2004.

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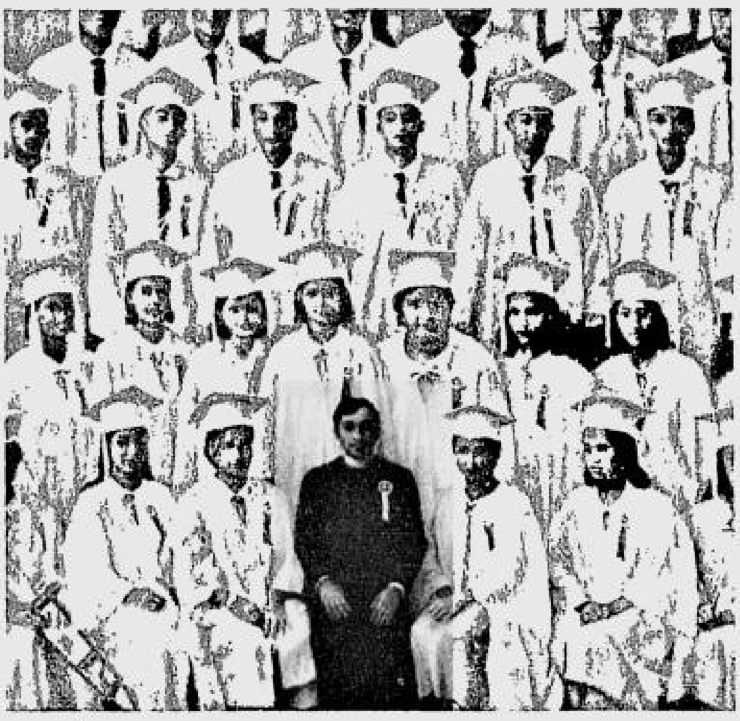
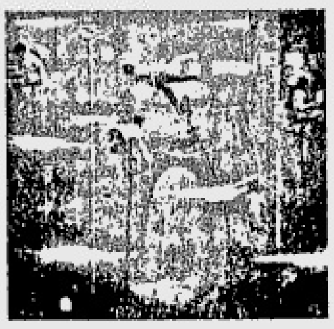


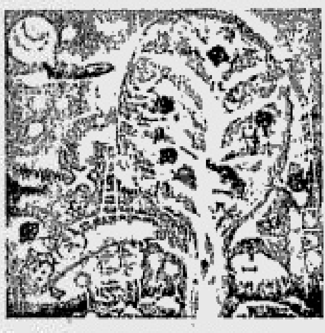
Grand Prize JAYPEE SAMSON
University of the Philippines-Diliman
"Huwarang Hangarin: Kabataan, Pag-Asa Pa Rin Ng Bayan!"
Oil on canvas, 29" x 29"

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj

2nd SAMUEL BULAGA
Technological University of the Philippines
"Munting Pangarap Ng Mga Batang Pinoy"
Oil, Pastel on canvas, 29" x 29"



3rd JOVEN MANSIT
University of the Philippines - Diliman
"One-Cycled Dreams"
Oil and Acrylic, 29" x 29"



4th ARGEL JOSEPH PENASBO
Far Eastern University
"Ang Puno Ng Mga Bagong Sibol"
Oil on canvas, 29" x 29"

5th EDWARD ALLAN GARCIA
Far Eastern University
"Ang Kabataang Isinusulat Ang Tadhana at Pangarap Sa Espasyo Ng Dilim, Ngunit May Kaakibat Na Liwanag"
Oil on canvas, 29" x 29"

1st Honorable Mention
ANDREI N. COLINARES
Far Eastern University
"Pamana Ng Idol Kong Si Kuya Pepe"
Oil on canvas, 29" x 29"

2nd Honorable Mention
ERWIN LLOYD P. SUMANG
Philippine Women's University
"Kabataan Ng Ating Bansa, Tulay Sa Magandang Kinabukasan"
Mixed Media, 29" x 29"

3nd Honorable Mention
YVEESE J. BELEN
University of Santo Tomas
"Elemento Ng Paghubog At Paglinang Sa Mga Bagong Kabataan"
Mixed Media, 27" x 27"

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Protesters to stage hunger strike vs coal-fired plant

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Environmentalists here were poised to stage a hunger strike as the construction of the German-backed $300M 210-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Villanueva, Misamis Oriental starts next week.

Bencyrus Ellorin, spokesperson of Task Force Macajalar, told the INQUIRER that hunger strike is the maximum form of protest they could stage against the power plant, being built by State Power Development Corp. (SPDC) and German firm STEAG-AG.

Ellorin said his group does not mind if some of them die during the hunger strike.

"Anyway the construction of the coal-fired power plant is already an open graveyard for the residents here and in Misamis Oriental. We believe that risking our lives would be worth it if only to stop the madness of government officials who are out to kill us with the toxicity of the pollutants of the coal," Ellorin said.

The Friends of the Earth in Japan (FOEJ) has earlier urged its government to cancel the loan that the Japan Bank for International Cooperation approved for the project.

FOEJ campaigner Hozue Hatae cited the Extractive Industries Report (EIR) published in December 2003 to back the group's assertion that JBIC should not anymore finance coal-related project.

The EIR is a review of the World Bank's involvement in oil, gas, and mining projects.

Ellorin said TFM has lauded the decision of the seven members of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Misamis Oriental to withdraw their support for the project.

Lawyer Oscar Musni, one of the board members, initiated the withdrawal of support from an earlier resolution that endorsed the project.

However, Misamis Oriental Acting Gov. Miguel de Jesus told the INQUIRER, that the project would go on because it has already been approved by the National Economic Development Authority's infrastructure committee. *Grace Cantal-Albasin, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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CRIME SCENE CHRIS R. REQUERON III/CONTRIBUTOR
Curious onlookers mill at the corner where at least two suspects fired their hand guns at Bohol Gov. Aumentado's service vehicle. At the background is the old provincial capitol, where the governor holds office.

P2.2-B road project in Maasin to start

By Jani Arnaiz
PDI Visayas Bureau

MAASIN CITY—The landslide in Panaon Island in December last year that left over 100 people dead has brought a blessing to the long-neglected island.

The government, having become aware of the need to develop infrastructure in the island in the wake of the pre-Christmas tragedy, is set to start in two weeks the seven-year-old road concreting project in Panaon and Pacific towns in Southern Leyte.

Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Lerias told the INQUIRER last Wednesday that Public Works and Highways Secretary Florante Soriquez was expected to sign last Friday a resolution confirming the winning bidders of the JBIC (Japan Bank for International Cooperation)-funded P2.2-billion road concreting project.

She said that after Soriquez' confirmation, the papers would be forwarded to JBIC office in Manila, which will in turn give a Notice to Proceed to the winning contractors.

"In two weeks time, the mobilization of equipment will start," said Lerias, quoting Highways Undersecretary Teodoro Encarnacion, who the governor said informed her of the 23rd Yen Loan Package update in a meeting in Manila on Monday.

The package also includes multi-billion infrastructure projects in Bohol and Marinduque provinces.

Lerias said President Macapagal-Arroyo would most likely launch the project in Maasin during her presidential campaign sortie in the province this March.

A consortium of Italian and Thailand contractors, Ital-Thai, won the bidding for the 38-km Liloan-San Ricardo concreting project, while a partnership of Cavite Ideal Contractors (Cavdeal) and China Road Projects will undertake the 163-km Himayangan-Silago-Abuyog, Leyte in the Pacific side of the province. The bidding was conducted last August.

Three villages in Liloan, San Ricardo and San Francisco, all on Panaon Island, were hit by landslides and flashfloods on Dec. 19 and 20 that left 154 persons dead. The bodies of many of the victims who were buried in mud have not been recovered to this day.

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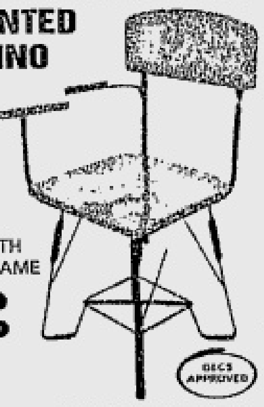
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SCHEDULE OF 31st ANNIVERSARY ACTIVITIES

February 16	
9:00 am	Thanksgiving Mass
10:00 am	Opening of Dr. Gutierrez' Art Exhibit
1:30 p.m.	Finals of D'VRPMC Inter-Color Bowling Tournament
February 17	
8 am - 5 pm	Voluntary Blood Donation
February 18	
12:00 pm	Interdepartmental Research Paper Contest
February 20	
9:00 am	Awarding of ISO Certificate Launching of Anniversary Rewards Voluntary Blood Donation Contest Winners *Awarding Ceremonies:* Loyalty Awards
1:00 p.m.	*Continuation of Awarding Ceremonies:* Punctuality and Perfect Attendance Awards 5S Awards; D'VRPMC Bowling Tournament Winners

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Celebrating 31 years of providing quality healthcare service!

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH

I would like to extend my warmest greetings to the administration and staff of the Dr. Victor R. Potenciano Medical Center (VRPMC) on celebration of their 31st Anniversary.

The Department of Health commends your vision of a highly responsive and stable health system committed to providing quality healthcare services. May you continue your noble mission to constantly improve the healthcare system and to make it truly responsive to the demands of the Filipino people.

It is laudable to note that you have remained dedicated and competent in providing quality health services through the years and for having sustained leadership in the fulfillment of your social responsibility to the country and the health sector.

I enjoin all of you to support the Department of Health's effort to provide accessibility to quality and affordable health services to Filipinos. Congratulations and mabuhay kayong lahat!

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

On our 31st Anniversary, we have a lot to celebrate and thank God for. Our year started with a fulfilling gift and rush of achievement with having earned the upgraded ISO 9001 version 2000 Certification for the whole Victor R. Potenciano Medical Center. It only proves our continuing commitment to sustain our internal strength as a medical organization and will bring us to greater heights as we provide quality healthcare service to our patients and extra service for their relatives and our other clientele. Having made such accomplishment, we are going head on in setting up meaningful milestones for this year. The Board has decided to initiate a number of measures for implementation this 2004 that could further our thrust for customer satisfaction in terms of affordability, comfort and competency. In line with this, VRPMC has not increased the rates of all diagnostic examinations and room rates for 2004. Furthermore, we now have fully operational specialty centers, namely the Heart Station and Cardiac Rehabilitation Center, Eye Care Center and Women's Health Center to provide accurate and specialized services. VRPMC will continue its physical improvements to create a better environment for our VRPMC clientele.

Again, in commemoration of our 31st Anniversary, allow me to congratulate and thank every member of VRPMC for joining me in our efforts to improve the overall service of our Hospital and rebuild VRPMC to what it is today. Your commitment and continued support helped us overcome the years past. I am sure that with God's grace, the year ahead will find us successful in achieving our aims for greater service and quality performance.

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Bishop blasts pols over 'jueteng' in Nueva Vizcaya

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—A Catholic bishop on Friday denounced "greedy" politicians in the province who he claimed were the "brains" in the recent resurgence of "jueteng" here.

"They were the ones who initiated this so that they would be able to get campaign funds, (with which) they would be able to buy votes or spend these funds during the campaign," Bishop Ramon Villena told the INQUIRER.

He, however, declined to identify these politicians. He said he was "very disappointed" to hear the "explosive news" from Gov. Rodolfo Agbayani that jueteng operations in the province had resumed.

Villena said he had received persistent telephone calls from residents annoyed by jueteng's resurgence in various towns.

The timing of the resurgence of jueteng, Villena said, pointed to a logical conclusion that it was connected with the May 10 elections as part of "money politics."

"It is very lamentable that through jueteng, (some politicians) get money from the poor, then afterwards they give the money back to the poor as if it were their own money," he said.

He called on the people "not to vote for candidates who receive money from jueteng lords and easily give money to their constituents."

The police may have also allowed the illegal numbers game to return, Villena said.

"They may have been pressured, or may even be afraid of the politicians. Or maybe, even the police allowed this thing to happen to get their own slice (of the jueteng *payola*)," he said.

Villena said Senior Supt. Felix Caddali, Nueva Vizcaya police director, earlier assured him that he would "do something" about the revived jueteng operations.

But the bishop expressed dismay that until Friday, he still received reports that jueteng continued to thrive "with practically no effort from the police."

Villena said Caddali had promised to step down if the police failed to control the resurgence of jueteng in the province.

"If (Caddali) really does not have the strength, the will and courage (to stop jueteng), then he should voluntarily leave as he promised," he said.

Agbayani said he has consulted with Villena and they agreed to give Caddali a chance to stop jueteng operations in the province.

"But the bishop said that if (Caddali) could not do anything to stop it, then we might ask for his relief, as well," Agbayani said.

Caddali assumed as provincial police director in December 2003 following the relief of Senior Supt. Jesus Manubay for the latter's supposed failure to curb the resurgence of jueteng in the province.

But Caddali said the police are doing their best to curb the "guerrilla-type" jueteng operations here.

"Our (anti-jueteng) operations are relentless. I have instructed my officers to exert all effort to arrest those responsible for these operations," he said.

Police officials here blamed the presence of the illegal numbers game in nearby Isabela and Nueva Ecija, with bet collectors sneaking in their collections and conducting draws at the provincial boundaries. *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Burials of 2 NPA victims turn into protest rallies

LIGAO CITY—The burial last Wednesday of the 10-year-old boy accidentally killed when New People's Army rebels ambushed a military convoy, turned into a protest rally with at least 300 families, including children mostly of NPA victims, joining the burial and condemning the NPA killings in Bicol.

Francis Orap, 10, of Barangay Allang, was buried in the city's public cemetery some 4 km from his residence.

Orap died instantly when he was hit by a bullet as he was taking a bath at his house near the ambush scene.

His sister Marites, 5, and brother Raymond, 6, were seriously wounded when at least 60 NPA members ambushed the military convoy of the 22nd Infantry Battalion based in Barangay Tula-Tula and headed by Col. Bienvenido Reyes, newly installed battalion commander.

Protesters raised placards with the words printed in red denouncing the communists.

Cesar Orap, father of Francis, said his son's death is the best evidence that the NPA rebels are anti-people, as they attack military men even in populated areas.

The NPA's Santos Binamira Command in Albay claimed that it was not the rebels' bullet that killed the boy but that of the military.

But the father strongly believed that it was the NPA who killed his son because the rebels were in an elevated position when the ambush happened.

In Lucena City, Mauban residents raged during the funeral Saturday of police official SPO3 Paulino Mancenido who was gunned down by a communist hit squad a week ago.

Chief Insp. Eric Villanueva, 415th Provincial Police Mobile Group chief who attended the burial, said indignant and placard carrying multi-sectoral groups brought the body of Mancenido to the Mauban cemetery.

"There's no truth to the New People's Army's accusation that officer Mancenido was involved in illegal drug activities. As a matter of fact, he was the most active policeman in Mauban in our fight against illegal drugs," he told the INQUIRER over the phone.

"He died a poor person with no house of his own, living only with his in-laws. What he left to his family is only a rickety service bicycle that he used in patrolling his beat."

The statement left by the rebel hit team belonging to the NPA's Apolonio Mendoza Command after the shooting, said Mancenido was killed due to his alleged protection racket that involved illegal drugs, illegal fishing and illegal logging, and extortion activities.

About 1,000 residents joined the indignation-funeral march. Some people carried placards denouncing the senseless NPA killings, according to reports of the Mauban News Cable Television. *Michael Jaucian, Delfin T. Mallari Jr., and Niño Jesus Orbeta, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Military sweeps worry Iloilo villagers

By Ma. Diosa Labiste and Nestor Burgos
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Military sweeps against communist rebels since August has made mountain villagers of Igbaras town, 40 km south of here, worried of the safety of their men folk.

Some young men are leaving their farms and families behind because they do not want to be suspected of siding with the rebels. Those who did not leave complained that soldiers constantly monitor their movements, and some boys were made as guides during the soldiers' patrols.

Florida Echalar, a widow of Barangay Igcabugao, said she sent her two sons, 25 and 23 years old, to Manila to find work. She said she was worried of their safety because the military suspected them to be sympathetic to the New People's Army.

Regie Esler, 15, claimed he was asked by soldiers to be their guide in the afternoon of Aug. 19. He was also asked to carry an Army's backpack and a rifle but he told them he would carry the rice kettle instead. It was dusk when he was allowed to go home after hours of walking.

Since August, soldiers from the 47th Infantry Battalion and Scout Rangers belonging to the 3rd Infantry Division have been combing the mountains of Igbaras as part of the Special Operations Team's missions to clear the area of NPA guerrillas. But as their stay lengthens, the soldiers seem to be losing the battle to "win the hearts and minds" of the locals.

In a dialogue with Iloilo government officials on Feb.10, farmers accused soldiers of committing human rights abuses and whipping up the anti-communist hysteria. A farmers group, Alyansa sang mga Mangunguma sa Igbaras (AMI), demanded the pullout of soldiers in their villages so that they could continue farming and live their lives.

Lt. Raul Vigo, company commander of the 31st Reconnaissance Company based in Barangay Tabiac, denied the allegations.

Vigo denied that he asked Esler to carry a backpack and a rifle. "My men do not need anyone to carry their things. They are strong because I give them vitamins," he said.

Vigo said several barangays in Igbaras were tagged as "rebel influenced," and the soldiers were always on alert.

Lt. Col. Danilo Estropia, 47th IB commander, has earlier said that the complaints against the soldiers were instigated by the NPA because they can no longer collect revolutionary taxes in the area.

He said he would not dignify the accusations with an answer because they were "shallow." "Why, have we beaten up or killed any one?" he said.

With the Army's presence anti-communist hysteria spread all over Igbaras. Posters with caricatures of Igbaras councilor Danny Mendoza, Talibo and AMI's officer Ricardo Jaranilla, were distributed and pasted at the town center. Signed by the National Alliance for Democracy, an anti-communist group, the posters try to link AMI with the clandestine National Democratic Front and Communist Party of the Philippines.

The dialog ended with the provincial government asking the military to respect rights of civilians and with the representatives of the Commission on Human Rights saying that they will look into the concerns raised by AMI.

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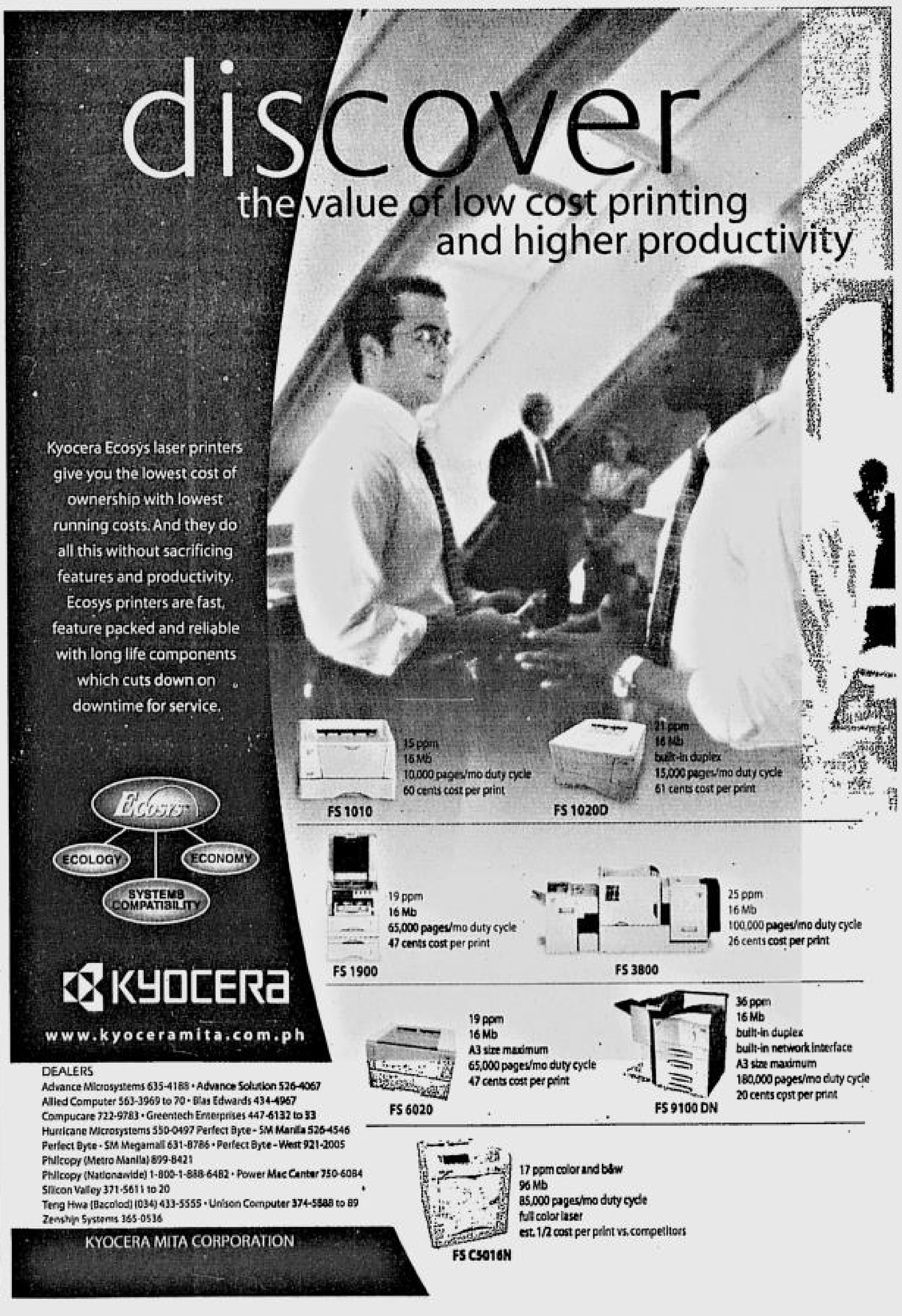
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GMA orders probe of Mindoro killings

From page A1

administration's harassment of its perceived political enemies was a good argument against extending the term of Ms Macapagal. The President is seeking a full six-year term.

Bayan Muna has accused the military of being behind the death of Magsino, who was supportive of the left-leaning party-list group.

Although a government official, Magsino, 34, had maintained a simple lifestyle. The car in which she died was owned by the municipal government and her parent's home is still an ordinary farmer's house.

The vice mayor was born on Aug. 6, 1969 in Barangay Adrialuna, Naujan, to Graciano Magsino of Mabini, Batangas and Leonila Maranan, of Barangay Sta. Isabel, Naujan. She has a sister, Jocelyn, who has been working in Rome since 1988 and a brother Joel.

Father's wish

Magsino dreamed of becoming an architect, but she pursued the law because it was the wish of her father, a farmer who was unfairly treated by a landowner.

The vice mayor's father had thought that having a lawyer in a poor family like his was important. The Magsinos farm five hectares of land, but own only two.

Magsino could very well understand her father's wish as she grew up on the farm. "She knew the work in the fields. She could plow and lift a cavan of rice," her mother said.

Because she and her siblings reached college at the same time, she was asked to stop going to school. But with help from her grandparents, also farmers, Magsino finished an AB Political Science course at the University of the East in Manila.

Working student

It was during this time that her leadership and human rights advocacy were enhanced. She was elected president of the Political Science Society and served as minority leader of the legislative branch of the student government.

To fulfill her father's dream, Magsino worked during the day at the Gonzales Law Office in Sta. Cruz, Manila, and studied law in the evening at the Manuel Luis Quezon University. In law school, she received the Justice Arsenio P. Dizon Memorial Award, which was equivalent to Outstanding Achievement and Performance in Remedial Law.

After passing the bar in 1994, she taught law at the MLQU while working as an associate lawyer in the Gonzales Law Office.

"Because he was already old, her father asked her to return home so they could be together," related her mother.

Magsino first worked as legal officer at Veritas Realty in Calapan until the local elections were held in 1998. She also taught law at the Divine Word College and the Luna Goco College.

Full of promise

During a barangay fiesta, Magsino caught the attention of Mayor Nelson Melgar, who was then serving his last term.

"Young, exuberant, friendly, *cariñosa* and full of promise," Melgar said of Magsino. "I thought she would make an effective candidate."

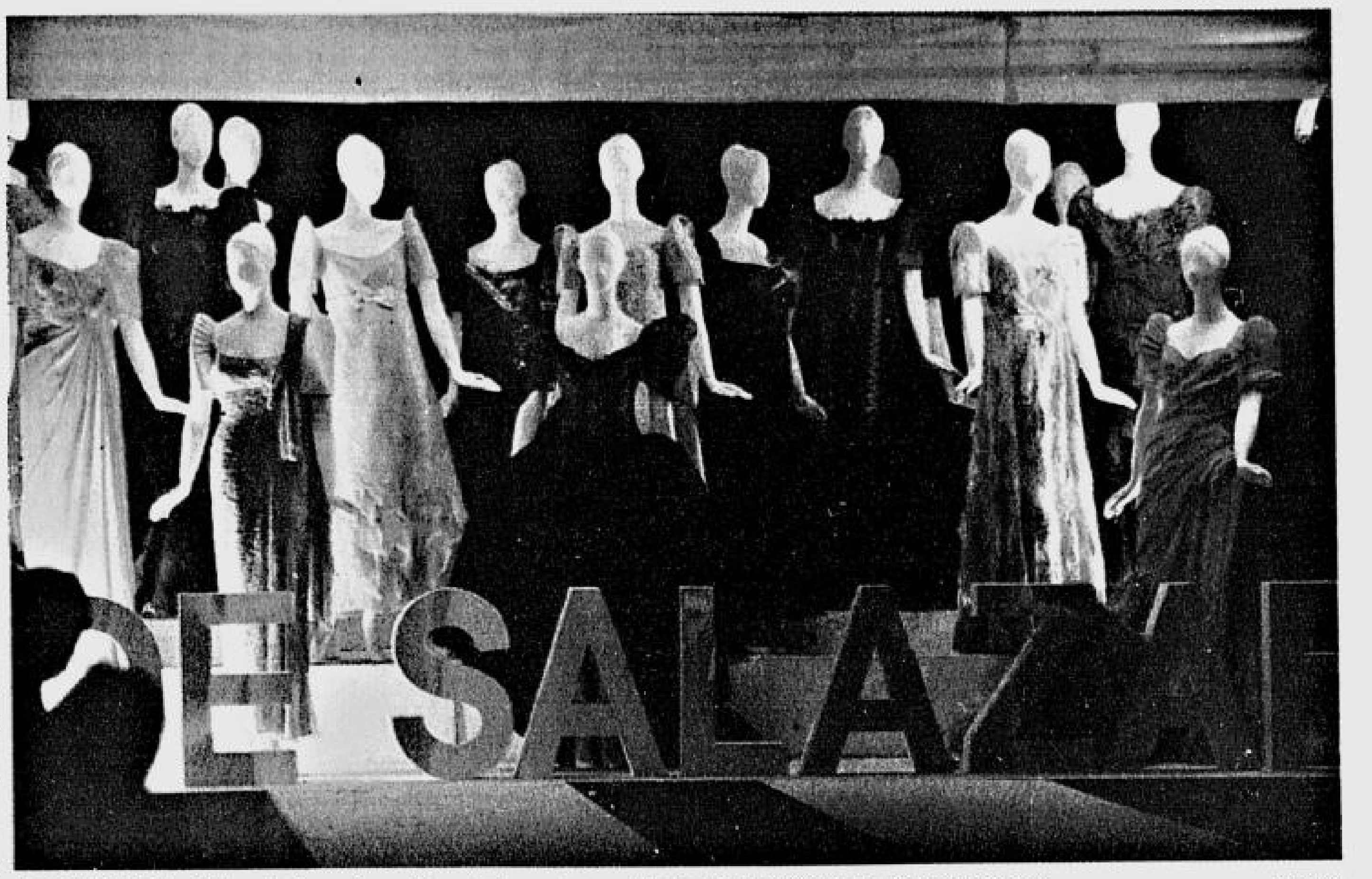
Melgar quit politics and became a political adviser to Magsino. "I saw myself in her with her idealism," the mayor said. It didn't take long for Magsino to be noticed outside Naujan. She would be invited to other towns as a guest speaker.

Magsino won as councilor with a record highest number of votes. After that, she was elected vice mayor. Despite her failure to get the votes of the Iglesia ni Cristo, she still won by 2,025 votes.

In the course of her political and legal career, she continued her human rights advocacy, condemning military abuses and corruption in local government. She was against mining.

Because of her advocacy, she received death threats, but she took them in stride. "It would be good to die in the service of the people," her mother quoted her as saying. ***With reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana, Norman Bordadora and Michael Lim Ubac***

MAGSINO: It would be good to die in the service of the people.



A COLLECTION of Salazar's "terno" creations during a retrospective fashion exhibit held on Nov. 23 last year. PDI PHOTO

Joe Salazar's quiet life, times, fashion and faith

From page A1

he was that "God made all these happen"—the logistics and resources that came at the last minute, the support of his long-time clients and, most important, his health.

That night, as he greeted friends and peers at the ABS-CBN ELJ Communication Center, Salazar looked like he had put on weight. His face had a pinkish glow and, in fact, he was strong enough to stay up until the last guest left. We thought he had finally beaten cancer.

Ironic

However, he was never able to revisit the exhibit to see that design enthusiasts from as far as Central Luzon made the commute to Quezon City, to admire and learn from his masterpieces.

A few weeks after that night, his health went downhill. He could no longer do the *ternos* and gowns that would have comprised his gala collection last November at the Metropolitan Museum Terno Show and Exhibit. He had to muster enough strength just to attend the fashion show tribute given him at the Met event by the younger designers.

Though they knew his health was waning, brides and many of Manila's high-profile women continued to flock to Salazar's atelier-home in Malate to have gowns and evening wear made. The last two years had been the busiest for his atelier since the 1980s, when he did all of Imelda Marcos' *ternos*.

One afternoon last August, he looked around his living room/dining room which had been turned into a workshop filled with cutters and seamstresses, and grinned at us, saying: "*Kung kailan pa ako nagkasakit* (Just when I got sick)."

There had been a resurgence of demand for his work, ironically at the time that he was diagnosed with throat cancer.

Small wonder. Strict elegance and glamour had returned to fashion, and this meant ball gowns, *ternos* and heavily crafted evening wear—all right down Joe Salazar alley.

In the past three months, Salazar was in and out of the hospital for chemotherapy. His atelier continued production until early last month, when it started turning away clients. Two weeks ago, we called to ask if he could join a bridal fashion show in March featuring top designers, or at least send an old wedding gown. The cancer had robbed him of the ability to speak; his staff felt it was safe to presume he would pass up on this one rather than lend an old gown for parading on the ramp.

Golden Age

By then, he was confined to his bedroom, and the atelier had a few remaining gowns to finish. On Saturday at 5:30 p.m., after final touches were put on the last wedding gown—that of Michelle Santos—Salazar breathed his last, surrounded by his siblings and seamstresses.

He had seen his craft through till the end.

Salazar belonged to the generation of Filipino fashion designers who breathed and lived their art, despite the odds. He and his peers—among them, Gang Gomez (now a Benedictine monk), Ernest Santiago, Rusty Lopez, Inno Sotto and Auggie Cordero—ascended in the 1970s when daily luncheon fashion shows were the vogue, engendering cutthroat competition on to the 1980s and 1990s.

These decades might be considered the (post-Ramon Valera period) Golden Era of Philippine fashion, because it was then that Filipino designers achieved significant trend-setting productivity in both haute couture and ready-to-wear.

Salazar started with casual wear, the most popular of which was the pantsuit movie superstar Nora Aunor wore for a soft drink ad. But when his exquisitely beaded blue chiffon gown won for him the Valera Award in 1975, Salazar became a major player in local fashion.

Downswing

In the early 1980s, then First Lady Imelda Marcos tapped Salazar to do most of her *ternos*—averaging six a month. Salazar lent each piece his design genius, his knowledge of construction, his penchant for painstaking detail and, most of all, his playful imagination. Marcos wanted to test the *terno*'s limits, and Salazar rose to the challenge. Together, patroness and artist broke the rules in *terno* design, material and ornamentation. Salazar experimented with embroidery, beading and appliqué, from horse hair to peacock feathers.

After the fall of the Marcoses in 1986, Salazar went into a downswing, if not depression. One of the things we remember during the 1986 Edsa Revolution were phone conversations with a tearful Salazar. One other trait that characterized him was loyalty.

He lay low, career-wise, but never really disappeared from the scene. Stylish women would wear a Joe Salazar now and then at high-profile events; their gowns were invariably noticed and earned media mileage.

This past decade, Salazar prevailed anew. He made the inaugural *terno* and other gowns of then First Lady Ma. Luisa "Loi" Ejercito, and the bridal gown of her daughter Jackie. Later, he also did the bridal gowns of Macapagal-Arroyo's daughters-in-law, Angela and Kakai. Salazar soon had the celebrity clientele back, notably Lucy Torres and Charlene Gonzales.

Controversial see-through

While he didn't grab the limelight, he plodded on behind the scenes. He never felt it was beneath him to join group shows, or make clothes for special events when asked. He made that controversial see-through hoop terno for Miss Israel in the 1974 Miss Universe contest held here.

Aside from his great talent, Salazar had other distinct qualities that made him an outstanding Filipino. Despite his stature, he was never loud or a limelight-grabber. He had *delicadeza* (sense of propriety), and was an honest worker. He enriched all the circles in which he moved with his own values, at a time when Philippine society as a whole needed them most.

(Salazar's cremated remains will be at the Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati, from this afternoon till Friday.)

Opposition should learn from primaries of US Democrats

From page A1

were their bailiwicks.

A contender needs at least 2,161 delegates to win the Democratic convention in July in Boston. Kerry's sweep of a broad canvass of American states shows that the man from a liberal New England state not only has a viable chance to win the conservative South but the capacity as well to win support across a wide spectrum of American voters, across race and economic and social interests, including the rural-urban, or agricultural-and-industrial and manufacturing divide.

His string of victories proves Kerry has the broad appeal to Democratic voters who are nursing a growing antagonism to the Bush presidency. The next contest turns to the big Midwest state of Wisconsin tomorrow, where Dean and Edwards are making their last stand.

This will be followed by a round of caucuses and primaries in Utah and Idaho for the rest of February and primaries in the big states, including California, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island and Vermont, beginning on March 2. This series poses the obstacles that Democratic contenders have to hurdle to prove their viability and the breath of their constituency in order to beat the sitting president.

The resurrection of Kerry is a story of turning public opinion polls on their head or a repudiation by electors of poll surveys.

What is more more important for Filipinos at the moment is not the final outcome of the Democratic nomination process but how its dynamic works in selecting presidential candidates under America's two-party system in a very open, democratic and competitive environment.

This process draws a stark contrast to the selection process followed in the Philippines, especially by the opposition, which began its process last November, ahead of the first Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primaries in January.

The Republican selection process is not being examined here. Bush does not face Republican primaries and caucuses. He is unchallenged in his reelection bid in the Republican Party whose convention will be a coronation for Bush.

Similarly, President Macapagal-Arroyo is unchallenged in the administration party.

Nomination

The scrutiny of the Democratic nomination process and that of the opposition alliance in the Philippines is important to make the point that these processes can lead to highly competitive elections, in which voters are given a choice of the best that either the administration or opposition can offer.

In the case of the Philippines, the nomination process, or a semblance of it, has led to a rigged result and a cul de sac.

American political parties use primaries to select their presidential nominees. Each state has a number of delegates proportionate to its population. The Democratic primaries and caucuses choose the 4,315 delegates who will select the party's presidential candidate at its national convention.

Primaries at the state level started in the the early 1900s. Prior to this, national political elders appointed the delegates to the convention, a system that invited corruption and manipulation by party bosses.

The primaries make the selection more open and democratic. Registered party members write in their votes, establishing the viability of a candidate through the primary test of a candidate to win across the nation. This process, with actual voter participation, made possible Kerry's spectacular overturning of public opinion polls, which had favored Dean before the primaries started.

Kerry's campaign gained momentum not because of public opinion polls but in spite of them. He established his viability on the basis of his primary victories which validated and confirmed his status as a candidate who has the ability to challenge Bush.

After the primaries, polls highlighted perceptions that Kerry could win. This is a case of the polls following the actual vote, not the voters following the polls as they had demonstrated in the primaries. The voters did not allow professional pollsters to determine the outcome of the selection process.

In the case of the Philippine opposition, its selection process clearly did not produce the best candidate to compete with the administration's candidate.

The opposition "road show" initiated by Sen. Edgardo Angara had no authentic feedback mechanism. Choices and decisions were not made on the basis of evidence of electability but on the basis of poll surveys that were not validated by actual voting on the grass roots.

How Angara et al. made their decision that Fernando Poe Jr. was the "front-runner" and was "winnable" is known only to themselves.

Key to victories

US pollster John Zogby said the key to Kerry's string of victories was the "growing belief among Democrats that he can defeat President Bush in November."

This perception was not derived from opinion polls but from Kerry's own ability to win the caucuses despite gloomy poll forecasts. "Kerry's support is wide and deep," says Zogby. "He has shown that he can hold all strands of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents together."

If Democrats have found Kerry to be a polarizing magnet who can beat Bush, the reason lies more in that Kerry has stripped Bush of the mantle as the ensurer of American national security in the midst of the war on terror. He has raised the right issues that have struck a chord among Democratic voters.

Issues define the debate in US primaries. Issues take the backseat in the Philippine election and are evaded by candidates. In the absence of issues that define the candidates, an undemocratic and arbitrary process manipulated by opposition leaders cut corners in the selection.

The opposition leaders selected their candidate that revived party bossism. As a result, they shortchanged the Filipino people by offering them garbage.

In endorsing Kerry, Clark said: "What I've said is the country needs the best president it can get." Did we ever get a chance to vote for the president the country can get from the opposition's selection process?

E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

SUERTRES 8 1 5
(In exact order)

SUPERLOTTO 6/49
4 20 29 30 33 35

CAMANAVA FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT

Relocated settlers turn into landlords

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

THEY are being blamed for the delay of the Camanava flood control project, but some of the informal settlers who had been forced out of the project area have gone back to their shanties to continue earning a living.

Some of the settlers who went back to the Maypajo creek in Caloocan said that the relocation sites in Bulacan were too far from their workplaces, and job opportunities in the province were scarce.

But the INQUIRER recently discovered that some of those who have moved to the relocation sites still get to maintain their shanties beside the creek—leasing the property to new settlers.

Alice, 29, and her husband moved into Maypajo creek several weeks after the area was cleared in 1998. She said that her family has been renting the house of one of the relocated residents for P600 a month—the cheapest they have found in the city.

Alice, a mother of three, has witnessed at least three clearing operations in the creek from 1998 to 2003. In each clearing, Alice said that she and her neighbors would just stand by, wait for the wrecking crew to leave and, before the end of the day, they would have rebuilt their shanties.

Although they are confident that no clearing operation would be done before the elections, Alice said that they are sure that the demolitions would resume right after the May polls.

Assistant project manager Carla Bartelo told the INQUIRER that about 500 families have returned to the project sites since the settlements were cleared in 1998. About 170 new families alone have settled in Maypajo creek.

It should have been the responsibility of the local government to keep the cleared areas free of illegal settlers, Bartelo said.

Project manager Louie Mamitag earlier told the INQUIRER that while the project was still on schedule, the influx of settlers in the cleared areas has started to delay the project. After the project's groundbreaking in July last year, less than two percent of the project has been completed.

Bartelo said that they have provided livelihood programs in the relocation sites.

She added that they have even formed a sub-committee to work with non government organizations interested in helping provide livelihood projects for the relocated settlers.

The P5-billion flood control project is meant to solve the perennial flooding problem in the area.

Residents turn against lawmen in Quiapo melee

By Leila Salaverria

TENSION yesterday gripped a community in Quiapo, Manila when members of the Western Police District dismantled a fruit stand where illegal drugs were said to be sold.

One policeman was hurt, while a vendor said she was slapped by a policeman during the melee that erupted during the police operation.

Initial reports from the WPD showed that several lawmen from Station 3 went to Norzagaray and Elizondo Streets in Quiapo at around 1 p.m. to check out reports that shabu was being sold in one of the stalls there.

When the lawmen arrived at the area, they found a fruit stall which they began dismantling. During an interview over radio station dzMM, Chief Insp. Jose Asayo said he and his men found two sachets of suspected shabu at the stall.

Asayo, who took part in the operation, said that when they started to take apart the stall, some Quiapo residents began throwing bottles and rocks at the lawmen. Members of the Special Weapons and Tactics unit had to be called in to defuse the tension.

PO1 Archilles Magat was hit in the eye by a bottle and had to be taken to the Chinese General Hospital, said SPO4 Mar Leonardo.

But a vendor, identified only as "Sara," said during a radio interview that one of the lawmen poked a gun at her and slapped her face. She also said that the WPD men were arrogant and did not even tell her why they had to tear down her stall. The vendor said she would be pressing charges.

Nobody was arrested in yesterday's operation.

Little angels that could

From page A24

them do things."

Blessings

When Gamboa finished his Physical Therapy course in 1998, he never expected to work in a charity clinic for cerebral palsy children—"blessings," he calls them.

A year after he graduated, Gamboa got a job at the Philippine Cerebral Palsy Inc. in Makati City, and became one of the three staff members of the Physical Therapy department at the center.

"Almost all of my classmates have gone and worked abroad," Gamboa said. "But I opted to stay and work here."

Passion for the job is the key ingredient that has made him stay and work at the center for almost five years, he said. Patience and love for children are next in line.

"You have to love what you do, it makes you like your job more … and I do love my job," Gamboa stressed.

Studies show that about 10 to 20 percent of children who have cerebral palsy acquire the disorder after birth. Many more cases are caused by an incident that occurs during pregnancy or birth. Acquired cerebral palsy is the result of brain damage in the first few months or years of life.

Donations

"The PT and OT (occupational therapy) services used to be for free," said Manuel Jason Berrera Jr., one of the therapists working at the center. "But because of the worsening economy and the dwindling number of donors, we had to charge the patients P50 per session since 2001.

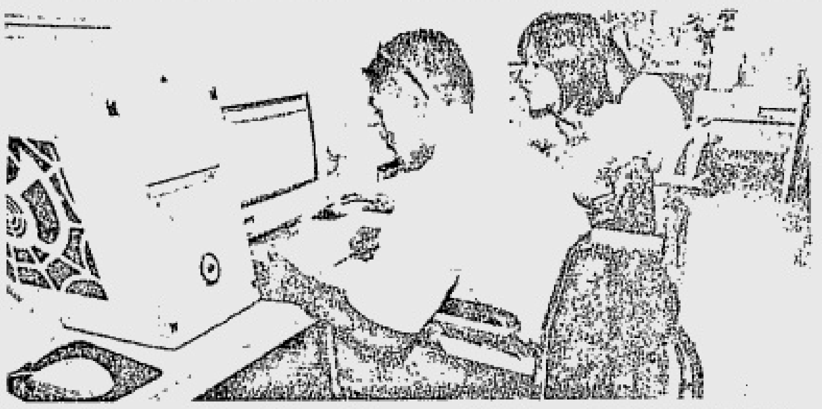
"It is still a very low amount compared to other hospitals and PT or OT services, where they charge you more than P1,000 per session."

Berrera said that although he was against the idea of charging the patients, he had to admit that there are fees to be paid to maintain the clinic's facilities and equipment.

Even though the clinic thrives on donations, and the PT and OT staff have their work cut out for them, Berrera said the rewards are more than he had bargained for.

"I love kids, and I believe in the cause of the center," Berrera said. "I'm dedicated to my job. Otherwise, I wouldn't have lasted five years in the center.

"Even a child's smile makes us happy."



CHILDREN on or off wheelchairs get the same satisfaction working with computers, according to William Balliett, chair of the Philippine Cerebral Palsy Inc. BETOY JOHNSON

Do not forget us, lawmen tell bets

DON'T forget to include us in your itinerary.

A group of Manila policemen has called on all candidates, particularly those running for president, to stop making sweeping statements about corruption in the police force.

According to SPO2 Antonio Emmanuel, president of the Manila's Finest Brotherhood Association, Inc. (MFBAI), their group is inviting candidates on the campaign trail so that they would be able to learn firsthand the situation of policemen at the grassroots level.

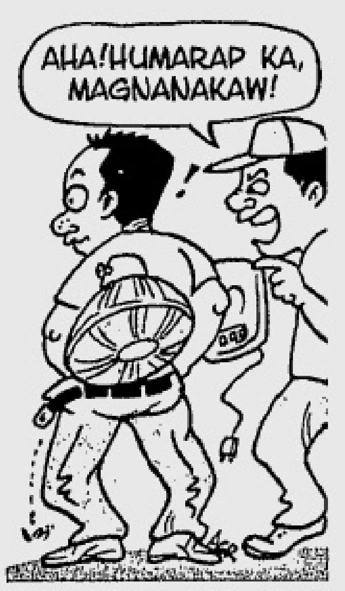
"Some politicians keep saying that policemen are corrupt, and once they are elected, they would get rid of corruption," Emmanuel said. "But such statements hurt us because the public (is led to believe) that all policemen are undisciplined and corrupt."

Instead of hurting the police force, the politicians should try to understand what ails the lawmen, he said.

"I hope politicians can learn to love us," Emmanuel said. "We're not the only problem in society. We also play an important part."

Visiting the police force would also give politicians a chance to air their platforms which, in turn, would allow policemen to evaluate the candidates' suitability for a post, Emmanuel said.

"We want to make the proper choice," he said. *Leila Salaverria*


AHA!HUMARAP KA, MAGNANAKAW!

2 nabbed while answering nature's call

DANILO Salun and Celestino Eleazar on Saturday were said to be answering nature's call in Payatas, Quezon City when patrolling barangay watchmen accosted them.

The watchmen got suspicious when they saw that the two men had an electric fan with them at 3:30 a.m.

The watchmen then frisked Salun, 26, and Eleazar, 24, and found a sachet of suspected shabu, police said.

When the suspects were hauled to the station, police learned that the fan was stolen from an elementary school in Bagong Silang, PO3 Pedro Walawala said in his report.

In Fairview, Quezon City, Christopher Aligim was stabbed to death because of a damaged cellular phone.

Witnesses told police that they heard Aligim, 27, of North Fairview, arguing with Noli Santos, 37, at around 9:30 p.m. Saturday.

Aligim's neighbors said Santos had accused the victim of selling him a defective mobile phone.

They said Santos stabbed Aligim in the throat, as the suspect's companion held the victim's arms. Santos and his companion are now at large, police said. *Edson Tandoc Jr.*

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MYTH vs FACT

MYTH
Diabetes can be cured if you take your medicines regularly.

FACT
Unfortunately, diabetes mellitus has no cure as of yet. The saying "once a diabetic... always a diabetic" still holds true, but researchers are continuously trying to find new ways to treat diabetes. The reason perhaps why the blood sugars are down is because of good control not "cure".

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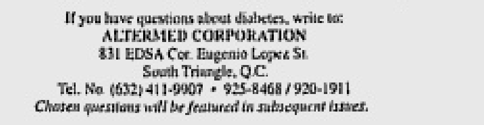

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Chosen questions will be featured in subsequent issues.

Reminder: Do not discontinue your anti-diabetes medicine. Consult your physician

The GSIS Scholarship Program

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- Parent's Certificate of Employment

Qualifiers shall take the GSIS Competitive Examination to be administered by the Center for Educational Measurement.

Scholars can choose from among any of the following 4 or 5-yr. GSIS Priority Courses: Accountancy, Actuarial Science, Business Administration, Computer Science and related IT courses, Economics, Engineering major in Computer, Civil, Electrical & Electronics, Electronics & Communications, Industrial, Management and Mechanical only, Finance, Management, Marketing, Mass Communications, Mathematics and Statistics.

For more details, please visit the GSIS Main Office or your nearest GSIS Branch/District Office or contact Emma, Nelda, Meljune and/or Marisa of the GSIS-HRDD Scholarship Staff at Tel. Nos. 551-1878 or 891-6161 locals 4862/4863.

Application deadline: 2 April 2004.

GSIS President and General Manager Winston Garcia

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METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

SUERTRES 8 1 5
(In exact order)

SUPERLOTTO 6/49
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CAMANAVA FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT

Relocated settlers turn into landlords

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

THEY are being blamed for the delay of the Camanava flood control project, but some of the informal settlers who had been forced out of the project area have gone back to their shanties to continue earning a living.

Some of the settlers who went back to the Maypajo creek in Caloocan said that the relocation sites in Bulacan were too far from their workplaces, and job opportunities in the province were scarce.

But the INQUIRER recently discovered that some of those who have moved to the relocation sites still get to maintain their shanties beside the creek—leasing the property to new settlers.

Alice, 29, and her husband moved into Maypajo creek several weeks after the area was cleared in 1998. She said that her family has been renting the house of one of the relocated residents for P600 a month—the cheapest they have found in the city.

Alice, a mother of three, has witnessed at least three clearing operations in the creek from 1998 to 2003. In each clearing, Alice said that she and her neighbors would just stand by, wait for the wrecking crew to leave and, before the end of the day, they would have rebuilt their shanties.

Although they are confident that no clearing operation would be done before the elections, Alice said that they are sure that the demolitions would resume right after the May polls.

Assistant project manager Carla Bartelo told the INQUIRER that about 500 families have returned to the project sites since the settlements were cleared in 1998. About 170 new families alone have settled in Maypajo creek.

It should have been the responsibility of the local government to keep the cleared areas free of illegal settlers, Bartelo said.

Project manager Louie Mamitag earlier told the INQUIRER that while the project was still on schedule, the influx of settlers in the cleared areas has started to delay the project. After the project's groundbreaking in July last year, less than two percent of the project has been completed.

Bartelo said that the [illegible] provided livelihood [illegible] relocation sites.

She added [illegible] a sub-committee to work with non-government organizations interested in helping provide livelihood projects for the relocated settlers.

The P5-billion flood control project is meant to solve the [illegible] flooding problem in the area.

Residents turn against lawmen in Quiapo melee

By Leila Salaverria

TENSION yesterday gripped a community in Quiapo, Manila when members of the Western Police District dismantled a fruit stand where illegal drugs were said to be sold.

One policeman was hurt, while a vendor said she was slapped by a policeman during the melee that erupted during the police operation.

Initial reports from the WPD showed that several lawmen from Station 3 went to Norzagaray and Elizondo Streets in Quiapo at around 1 p.m. to check out reports that shabu was being sold in one of the stalls there.

When the lawmen arrived at the area, they found a fruit stall which they began dismantling. During an interview over radio station dzMM, Chief Insp. Jose Asayo said he and his men found two sachets of suspected shabu at the stall.

Asayo, who took part in the operation, said that when they started to take apart the stall, some Quiapo residents began throwing bottles and rocks at the lawmen. Members of the Special Weapons and Tactics unit had to be called in to defuse the tension.

PO1 Archilles Magat was hit in the eye by a bottle and had to be taken to the Chinese General Hospital, said SPO4 Mar Leonardo.

But a vendor, identified only as "Sara," said during a radio interview that one of the lawmen poked a gun at her and slapped her face. She also sa'd that the WPD men were arrogant and did not even tell her why they had to tear down her stall. The vendor said she would be pressing charges.

Nobody was arrested in yesterday's operation.

Little angels that could

From page A24

them do things."

Blessings

When Gamboa finished his Physical Therapy course in 1998, he never expected to work in a charity clinic for cerebral palsy children—"blessings," he calls them.

A year after he graduated, Gamboa got a job at the Philippine Cerebral Palsy Inc. in Makati City, and became one of the three staff members of the Physical Therapy department at the center.

"Almost all of my classmates have gone and worked abroad," Gamboa said. "But I opted to stay and work here."

Passion for the job is the key ingredient that has made him stay and work at the center for almost five years, he said. Patience and love for children are next in line.

"You have to love what you do, it makes you like your job more ... and I do love my job," Gamboa stressed.

Studies show that about 10 to 20 percent of children who have cerebral palsy acquire the disorder after birth. Many more cases are caused by an incident that occurs during pregnancy or birth. Acquired cerebral palsy is the result of brain damage in the first few months or years of life.

Donations

"The PT and OT (occupational therapy) services used to be for free," said Manuel Jason Berrera Jr., one of the therapists working at the center. "But because of the worsening economy and the dwindling number of donors, we had to charge the patients P50 per session since 2001.

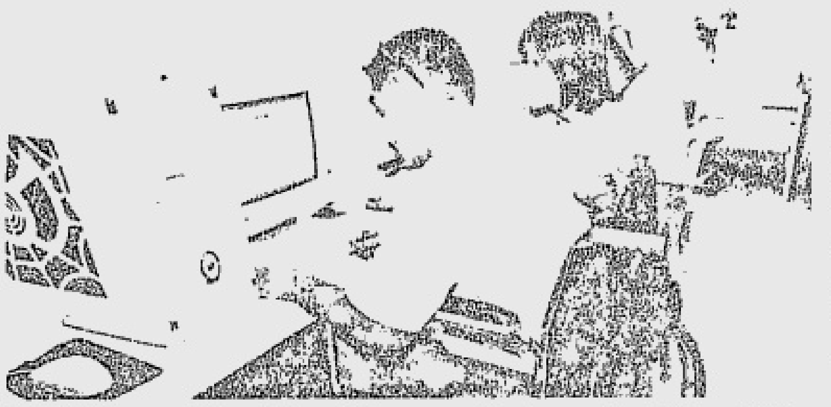
"It is still a very low amount compared to other hospitals and PT or OT services, where they charge you more than P1,000 per session."

Berrera said that although he was against the idea of charging the patients, he had to admit that there are fees to be paid to maintain the clinic's facilities and equipment.

Even though the clinic thrives on donations, and the PT and OT staff have their work [illegible] and the wards [illegible] more than he had bargained for.

"I love kids and I believe in the cause of the center," Berrera said. "I'm dedicated to my job. Otherwise, I wouldn't have lasted five years in the center.

"Even a child's smile makes us happy."



CHILDREN on or off wheelchairs get the same satisfaction working with computers, according to William Balliett, chair of the Philippine Cerebral Palsy Inc. BETOY JOHNSON

Do not forget us, lawmen tell bets

DON'T forget to include us in your itinerary.

A group of Manila policemen has called on all candidates, particularly those running for president, to stop making sweeping statements about corruption in the police force.

According to SPO2 Antonio Emmanuel, president of the Manila's Finest Brotherhood Association, Inc. (MFBAI), their group is inviting candidates on the campaign trail so that they would be able to learn firsthand the situation of policemen at the grassroots level.

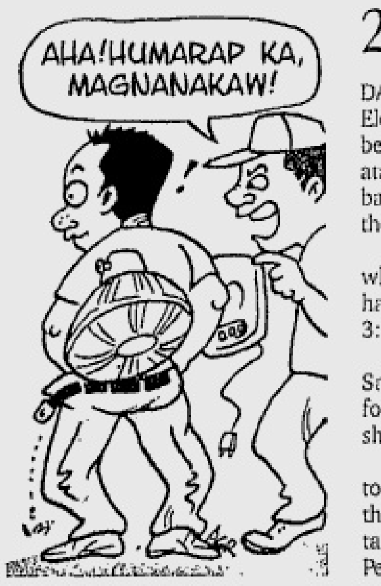
"Some politicians keep saying that policemen are corrupt, and once they are elected, they would get rid of corruption," Emmanuel said. "But such statements hurt us because the public (is led to believe) that all policemen are undisciplined and corrupt."

Instead of hurting the police force, the politicians should try to understand what ails the lawmen, he said.

"I hope politicians can learn to love us," Emmanuel said. "We're not the only problem in society. We also play an important part."

Visiting the police force would also give politicians a chance to air their platforms which, in turn, would allow policemen to evaluate the candidates' suitability for a post, Emmanuel said.

"We want to make the proper choice," he said. *Leila Salaverria*


AHA! HUMARAP KA, MAGNANAKAW!

2 nabbed while answering nature's call

DANILO Salun and Celestino Eleazar on Saturday were said to be answering nature's call in Payatas, Quezon City when patrolling barangay watchmen accosted them.

The watchmen got suspicious when they saw that the two men had an electric fan with them at 3:30 a.m.

The watchmen then frisked Salun, 26, and Eleazar, 24, and found a sachet of suspected shabu, police said.

When the suspects were hauled to the station, police learned that the fan was stolen from an elementary school in Bagong Silang, PO3 Pedro Walawala said in his report.

In Fairview, Quezon City, Christopher Aligim was stabbed to death because of a damaged cellular phone.

Witnesses told police that they heard Aligim, 27, of North Fairview, arguing with Noli Santos, 37, at around 9:30 p.m. Saturday.

Aligim's neighbors said Santos had accused the victim of selling him a defective mobile phone.

They said Santos stabbed Aligim in the throat, as the suspect's companion held the victim's arms. Santos and his companion are now at large, police said. *Edson Tandoc Jr.*

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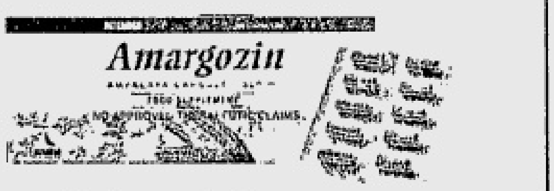

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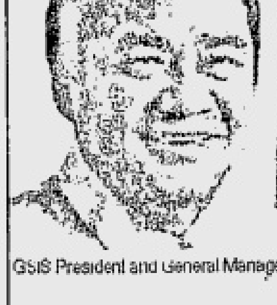
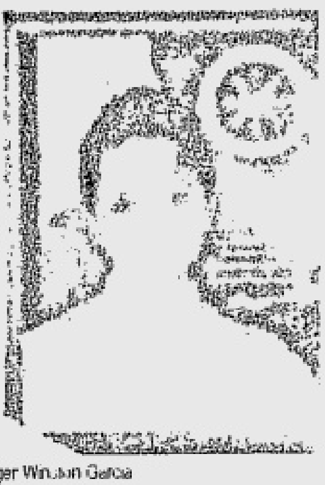


GSIS President and General Manager Winston Garcia



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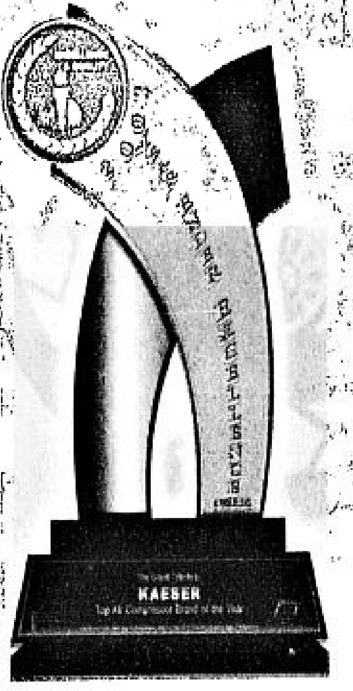

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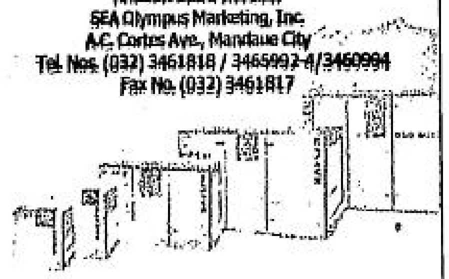

BLESSED are what these children are, says one of the therapists tending to the kids. BETOY JOHNSON

KIDS WITH CP

Little angels that could

By Joyce Abaño

RIELLA Mae, 8, warmed the hearts of her physical therapists when she took her very first steps a few weeks ago.

Riella Mae has cerebral palsy spastic diplegia, and she has been getting therapy at the Philippine Cerebral Palsy clinic regularly since she turned five.

Cerebral palsy is a permanent condition that affects thousands of babies each year. It is caused by injury to parts of the brain that control the ability to move muscles.

It was the goal of physical therapists to make Riella Mae walk, or at least to balance herself. For the therapists, the girl's progress brought a sense of fulfillment.

First step, first word

"Have you ever heard a family member talk about a child's first step, or the first word a child spoke?" asked Lawrence Gamboa, a physical therapist at the Philippine Cerebral Palsy clinic. "Out here at the clinic, we talk about a patient's first time to handle a spoon, or an 8-year-old girl's first steps … any improvement makes us happy."

Riella Mae's case is one of the easier ones. Several children at the clinic have cerebral palsy spastic quadriplegia. These kids cannot move all their limbs, and most have to move around in wheelchairs—with the help of someone else.

A world of their own

Raymond has spastic quadriplegia, and he has to lie down on mats most of the time.

But Raymond has been receiving therapy at the clinic for quite some time now. Now, he can move around a room on a cart, which he propels using his elbows.

It was what the therapists were aiming for—to give Raymond a semblance of mobility.

Then there is the case of an autistic girl who has cerebral palsy spastic diplegia.

Gamboa said the case of the little girl is one of the more difficult ones.

"Autistic children have their own world," Gamboa said. "And it is sometimes difficult to reach them, or talk to them, or make

LITTLE/ A23

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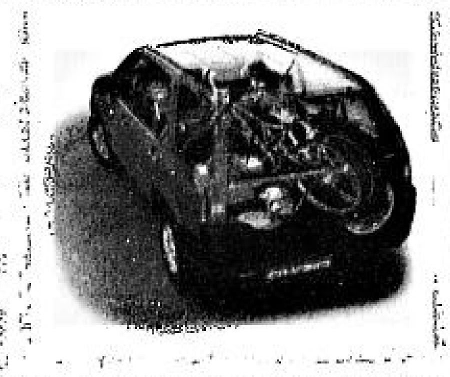

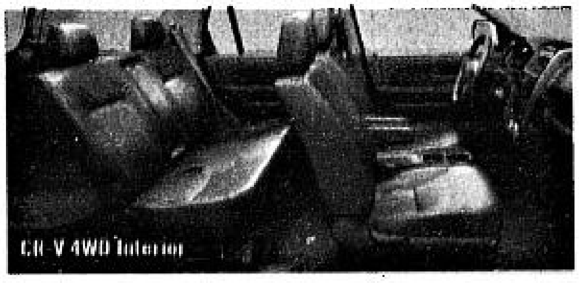

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Compiled by L. Mangulat

BASKETBALL: 2004 NBA All-Star Game; 9 a.m. (r-6:30 p.m.); IBC 13; 9:30 p.m.; Solar Sports—The league's best gather at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, California, for the 53rd edition of the All-Star Game.

NBA Greatest Games-Raptors vs Knicks, Game 2, 2002 Eastern First Round; 9 a.m.; Solar Sports.

US NCAA; 6 p.m.; Solar Sports—The Maryland Terrapins battle the Florida St. Seminoles.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

SPORTS

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Editor **Teddyvic S. Melendres**
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RP pros out to break long dry spell in Asian Tour

PDI PHOTO

MIÑOZA hard-pressed to match his feat in 1998.

By Jong Arcano

CHANCES of a Filipino pro ending the country's five-year drought in the Asian Tour remain strong despite an impending invasion of foreign pros in the DHL-sponsored 88th Philippine Open golf championship on Feb. 26-29 at the Langer course of the Riviera Golf and Country Club.

There will be at least 26 Filipino pros in the starting field of 159 players. Leading the homegrown bets is Frankie Miñoza, who won two legs in the Asian Tour in a memorable 1998 campaign where he broke into the Top 50 of the world rankings.

One of those victories was the Philippine Open at the Couples course of the Riviera.

At the moment, Miñoza, 44, is certainly not as competitive as he was back in 1998. But he still commands the respect of the men in the Asian Tour and he should become a solid threat when the Open, presented by San Miguel Beer, is held nine days from now.

Gerald Rosales had actually won the Open in 2000 but it was then not part of the Asian circuit due to the failure of organizers to meet the dollar requirements.

To break the spell, the local pros will need to beat a talent-laden cast of about a hundred players from 18 countries. At the vanguard of this challenge is defending champion Rick Gibson of Canada who is now based in Manila.

Among the 100 Tour regulars confirmed to play are Thai hotshots Boonchu Ruangkit and former amateur sensation Prom Meesawat, European Tour regular Jeev Milkha Singh of India, former Open winners Anthony Kang (US), Yeh Chang-ting (Taiwan) and Hsieh Chin-sheng (Taiwan).

Kyi Hla Han, the leader of a breakaway group of Asian pros now managing the Tour, is also coming not just to compete but also to supervise the fifth tournament in their schedule after the Thailand Open, the Johnnie Walker Classic, the Myanmar Open and this week's $900,000 Malaysian Open.

Patrick Young, director for Tour development of the Han group based in Singapore, said that Han asked him to

RP PROS/ A26

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Lady Falcons close in on softball crown

JOANA Carungan spun a one-hitter and Lovely Parohinog belted a solo home run as Adamson shut out Santo Tomas, 3-0, Saturday in Game 1 of their best-of-three duel for the 66th University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) women's softball crown at the UST field.

The Lady Falcons, bidding for a fifth crown, battered UST pitcher Esmeralda Tayag for five hits in an amazing turnaround for a team the Lady Tigers had blasted twice in the double-round eliminations.

"The girls are confident. They have peaked at the right time," said Adamson head coach Boy Codiñera. "We feel we will win it on Wednesday."

Parohinog opened the second inning by smashing Tayag's second pitch to left field for a solo homer. Cathy Rance followed with a walk, stole second and made it home for 2-0 when Analyn de Guzman's grounder caused one of three errors of the Lady Tigers in the match.

With Carungan keeping the Lady Tigers at bay, the Lady Falcons picked up its third run in the fifth through Che Valenzuela, who singled home Adamson skipper Karen Aribal from second.

Adamson tries to wrap up the title Wednesday with a determined squad of six rookies, five sophomores and nine veterans.

Pacquiao sparmate gets title shot versus Valbuena

PACQUIAO

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

IT'S official.

The vacant International Boxing Federation super bantamweight title relinquished by Manny Pacquiao will be contested by top-ranked Venezuelan Jose Luis Valbuena and No. 5 Mexican Israel "Magnifico" Vazquez.

The New Jersey-based IBF had already given last Thursday the green light for Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions, which promotes Valbuena, to hold the fight with Vazquez on March 25 at the Grand Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles.

Pacquiao, through promoter Murad Muhammad, had officially abandoned the IBF belt last Jan. 15 to campaign in the higher featherweight class, where he is slated to challenge WBA/IBF champ Juan Manuel Marquez on May 22.

The 32-year-old southpaw Valbuena boasts of a 24-2-1 win-loss-draw record with 14 KOs, while Vazquez, a perennial sparmate of Pacquiao at the Wild Card Gym, sports a record of 35-3 with 25 KOs.

Golden Boy Promotions had initially held talks with No. 3 Paulie Ayala, who turned down the offer in anticipation of a possible clash with Marco Antonio Barrera in April.

No. 4 Nedal Hussein also turned down the offer to fight Valbuena, as he is awaiting for his mandatory challenge of the rival WBC crown being held by Mexican Oscar Larios.

Meanwhile, Pacquiao and business manager Rod Nazario are slated to leave for the United States on Feb. 20 to hold talks with Muhammad, HBO's Kerry Davis and Marquez promoter Bob Arum.

Reports said only Pacquiao's signature is needed for his duel with Marquez to be finally declared official.

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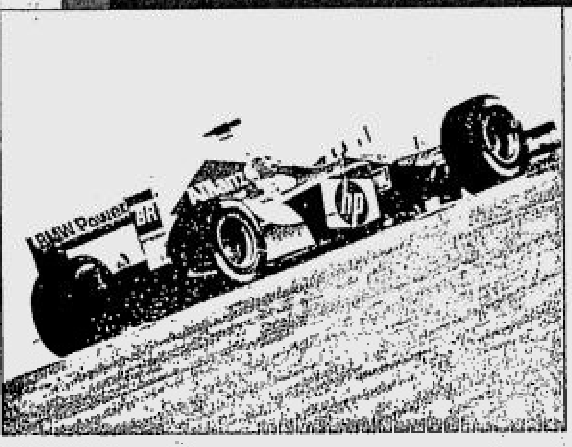

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Giant Eagle Ridge slates 1st club championship

THE EAGLE Ridge Golf and Country Club in Gen. Trias, Cavite, will stage its first ever club championship in April to set off another busy summer schedule for the country's biggest golf complex.

With its handicapping system already being set up through the Information Professionals Inc., Eagle Ridge project director Winfred Gob said the time is ripe for the club to determine who's the best in various skill levels of both genders.

The stroke-play qualifying rounds are scheduled on April 3-4, with the top eight players advancing to the quarterfinals where play shifts to match. The semifinals will be held on April 11 with the finals set on April 17.

The entire club championships will be played at the Faldo course, one of the four 18-hole championship courses of Eagle Ridge, a joint venture project of Sta. Lucia Realty and Alsons Land Inc.

First to come in as a sponsor is Consolidated Insurance which will reward a hole-in-one feat on all par-3s with a P100,000 prize.

Registration is now going on, with the deadline set on March 31.

RP pros out to break . . .

From page A25

relay the message they're fully supporting the move of organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines to transfer the venue from Mimosa to Riviera.

"I've seen the conditions at Mimosa myself and I believe that the transfer is in the best interest of the Open," said Young.

Young has finalized with NGAP the holding of a special 18-hole qualifying for 10 slots on Friday, Feb. 20, at the Couples course. The search for Open "rabbits" is open to pros and amateurs of all nationalities.

Interested players will have until Feb. 18, Wednesday, to register either at the NGAP or Riviera.

There are 53 conditional entries from 15 nations on the Asian Tour and most of them have expressed interest to join the event. The Professional Golfers Association of the Philippines will be allowed to field in the Top 20 players in its Order of Merit.

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Lim may yet save RP caging

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

IF to a boxer's weapon, that was a killer punch Graham Lim had thrown.

Problem was the poor guy also exposed his chin to an even bigger knockout shot.

Indeed, it was a cheap, shallow move he had made.

But I did not find it right to hate Lim, sec-gen of the embattled Basketball Association of the Philippines, for slamming out the PBA program of a full, wholehearted involvement in national basketball team participation in major international tournaments.

Maybe Lim just wanted to be original.

Maybe he did not like to be a copycat of his counterpart in the United States which all these past years has been relying on good, old NBA for participation in major international tournaments, mainly the Olympics.

Who knows? Maybe Lim, found to be a Chinese based on his birth records, wanted to do something noble to uphold his frantic bid for Filipino citizenship.

Lim's passport has been canceled by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Over the weekend, a basketball group sent documents to the INQUIRER specifying the Justice Department order to the Bureau of Immigration for an immediate resolution of the deportation case against Lim.

***

There were indeed a number of factors behind the shocking Lim move that, unfortunately, were not detailed by the BAP sec-gen.

All he said he wanted was a shift to a new mode in the formation and sending of our national basketball team both to the Asian Games and the Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) championship.

He failed to elaborate.

Naturally, Lim became a subject of grave suspicions.

There came whispered charges that Lim did it for a gigantic fee.

The ready line was that he had pawned the future of Philippine basketball to Cebuana-Lhuillier, Lim's latest source of funds for the national squad.

Someone mentioned a figure of P20 million.

***

Oh, forget that the great Yao Ming himself had confided to Quinito Henson in California that the RP team, based on the showing of the PBA selection in the 2002 Busan Asiad, could be an Asian basketball champ again.

Anyway, another charge had it that Lim wanted to derail RP basketball to save China from a future threat.

Lim's move was so unthinkable that the sharp, hard-hitting Dodo Catacutan of the Manila Daily Bulletin minced no words in saying it smacked of sabotage.

Actually, the biggest beneficiary of the Lim program, mileage-wise, should be national pawnshop Cebuana-Lhuillier.

Unfortunately, Lim had succeeded in projecting an image of this sponsoring outfit as something that cannot be trusted.

***

With the Lim-Lhuillier folly, the main man contesting the legitimacy of the BAP predictably jumped in for a knockout.

Nic Jorge said the Lim move was not sane; an accusation backed up by Sen. Robert Jaworski who called the said ploy a fantasy.

Jorge, sec-gen of the Basketball Association of the Philippines Inc. (Bapi), has been petitioning authorities to recognize his association based on court rulings and pertinent records at the Securities and Exchange Commission.

At the same time, Jorge said he would work for the organization of a super basketball body involving all major partners for development in the country, like the PBA and the PBL.

Jorge claimed the Philippine Sports Commission was in the process of bestowing recognition on the Bapi.

But that may not be the only thing needed in order to save RP basketball from the dangers Lim had wrought.

The Philippine Olympic Committee shall itself stop looking at this case with sissy eyes.

***

There's a win-win solution to this mess.

Here: The PSC and POC could join hands and recognize Bapi.

As Jorge has been claiming he's fighting the BAP to save and uplift basketball, he must be made to sign a covenant that he would conduct an election of officers of the officially recognized basketball body, before stepping down.

All legit, major basketball entities should be enlisted.

Lim himself could take a crack at his old post.

Even the great Go Teng Kok, the Graham Lim patron last seen haggling with BI Commissioner Al Fernandez, could join the national basketball election.

Something's got to give to rid our national game of a wild, misdirected official who made it there on dirty political patronage.

In the end, once a significant change in the national basketball hierarchy takes place, Graham Lim should also be thanked.

That silly killer punch he threw at the PBA could be the key to all the great changes.

PBA wants Argentina's Club Obras

ROMY HOMILLADA

REYES: Impressed with the Argentines

By June Navarro

THE PHILIPPINE Basketball Association is looking at a champion club team from Argentina to take the place of the Angola national five and complete the foreign challenge in the coming PBA Fiesta Conference.

With help from Coca-Cola coach Chot Reyes, the PBA sent an invitation to Club Obras to join Lebanon's national team in the Fiesta Conference set to start on Feb. 22.

Reyes, who attended a four-day coaching seminar in Argentina last month, helped contact Club Obras through the team's assistant coach, Fernardo Murphy.

"I don't know the chances of inviting them over. But I guess it might all boil down to their schedule. *Kapag walang* (If there's no) conflict, there's a big chance that they would come over," said Reyes, who added he was impressed by Club Obras during his Argentina sojourn.

Argentina became an overnight basketball sensation when its national team set a first in the sport by beating an all-NBA United States team during the 2002 World Basketball Championships in Indianapolis.

The PBA has also sent invitations to the Melbourne Tigers of Australia, Canada's Simon Fraser University and a club team from New Zealand.

The Angolans begged off from the Fiesta Cup, citing the need to instead go to Athens early to acclimatize themselves with Greece's chilly weather in time for the Olympics.

The foreign teams will see action in the quarterfinals of the Fiesta Conference, a transition tournament before the PBA unfurls its new calendar and format in September.

Gonzales-Grecia bags Emelie doubles crown

HOLY Ann Gonzales and Edna Grecia of Phoenix Tennis Club-Parañaque outhustled and outplayed Tet Requizo and Lota Santos of Cainta Tennis Federation, 6-1, 6-3, on Valentine's Day to capture the executive doubles crown of the Hotel Emelie All-Women's Tennis Open.

Gonzales and Grecia's triumph came after age grouper Bien Zoleta and Ivy de Castro stunned national team mainstays Czarina Mae Arevalo and Tracy Santos, 4-6, 7-5, 6-3, in the open doubles.

In the novelty awards, executive netters Liza Babia and Grace Dumaoal of Phoenix were adjudged best dressed; and Dona Balagtas of CTF won the Avon Glamour Face of the Open.

Sponsor Emelie Botor, together with Park Place Tennis Club officers headed by lawyer Juancho Botor and former PBA star Willie Generalao, handed out the trophies, gift packs and bouquet of roses to the winners.

Arevalo consoled herself with the singles title following a 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 victory over Santos to take home the P10,000 champion's purse in the netfest organized in cooperation with Avon Beauty Products, Milo, adidas, Wilson balls and the PSC, and sanctioned by the Philippine Tennis Association.

With a tournament-best 13 aces, Arevalo was also crowned Queen of Aces.

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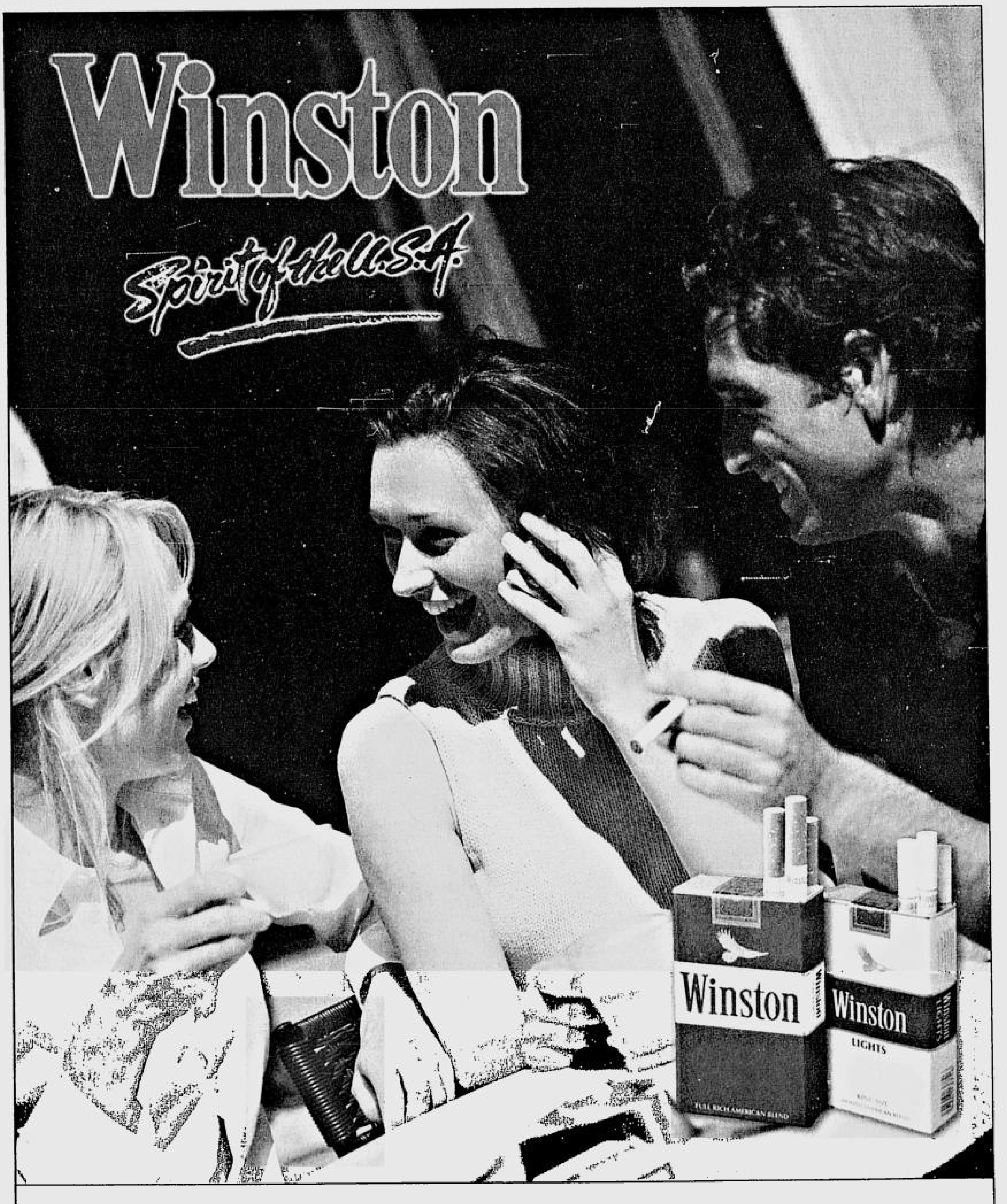

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ALL-STAR SATURDAY

Jones, Lenard steal show in slam dunk, 3-pt tilts

LOS ANGELES—LeBron James pulled off the best move of All-Star Saturday—leaving early.

After seeing missed dunk after missed dunk and some highly questionable rulings in the final round, the 19-year-old rookie phenom uttered a dismissive "no contest" as he walked out of the arena before the night's final dunk—or dunk attempt, in this case.

A missed dunk by two-time defending champion Jason Richardson on the final attempt of the night gave the title to Fred Jones of the Indiana Pacers, providing a disappointing finish to All-Star Saturday night.

"I think I've had better," said Jones, a 6-foot-4 (1.9-meter) guard from Oregon who was the 14th overall pick of the 2002 draft.

Peja Stojakovic of the Sacramento Kings also failed to become a third-time winner, missing his final attempt of the 3-point shooting contest—a shot that would have forced an extra round.

The miss made a winner of Voshon Lenard of the Denver Nuggets, who hit all five of his 2-point money shots using the red, white and blue ball that's shot last from each of the five designated perimeter spots.

In early events, Baron Davis of the New Orleans Hornets won the skills challenge, and Derek Fisher, Lisa Leslie and Magic Johnson—representing the hometown Los Angeles Lakers—won the inaugural skills challenge.

The best dunks of the dunk contest came from the two finalists—Richardson and Jones—and earned perfect 50-point scores.

Jones earned a 50 in the first round with a high-velocity toss-and-dunk throwdown, while Richardson got his perfect score for passing the ball to himself off the backboard, catching it and bringing it between his legs from his right hand to his left before slamming it through.

All five judges stood up in appreciation as they held up placards reading "10."

"I wanted to go out there and try to do something hard. It's really hard to come up with something new," Richardson said.

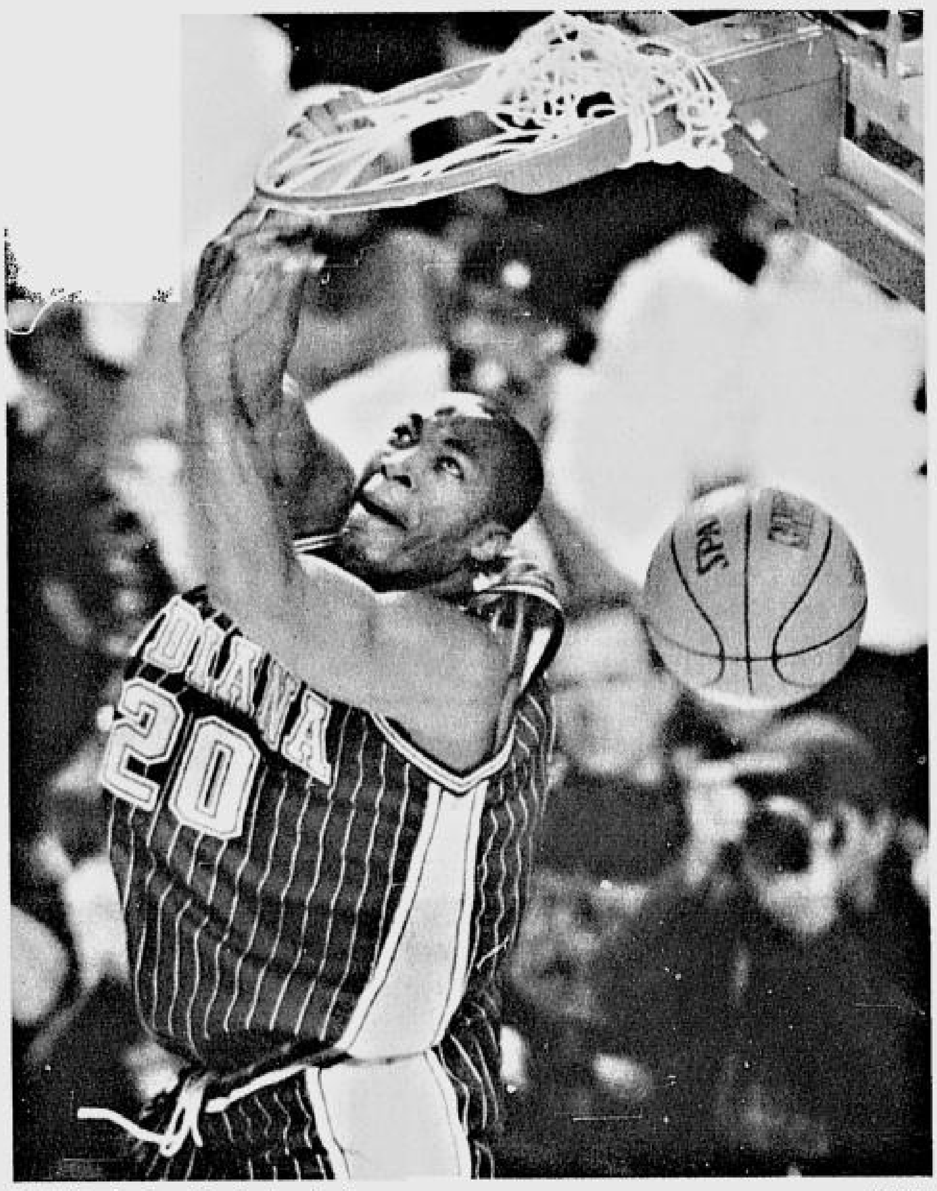
Jones earned a 50 on the first dunk of the final round, tossing the ball toward the basket, reaching far back to grab the ball and hammer it through.

"That's where I wanted it — as far away as possible so I could extend all the way and give it a little more flair," Jones said.

It ended up being the last great dunk of the night.

Richardson missed his first attempt of the final round and was given three more chances to try it, though he missed each time. He eventually switched to a more conventional 360-degree dunk and earned a score of 45.

Jones surprised the crowd before his final attempt by tossing the ball to a young man in a Pacers jersey four rows back in the stands, a former AAU teammate of his from Portland, Brandon Brooks. *AP*



JONES unleashes his winning dunk. REUTERS

O'Neal still undecided

LOS ANGELES—Shaquille O'Neal does not yet know whether he'll play at the Athens Olympics, and his decision could be affected by how far the Los Angeles Lakers go in the playoffs.

Three spots remain open on the United States roster, and there could be a fourth if Kobe Bryant is unable to play because of his sexual assault trial in Colorado.

"I've done it twice, and I want to give other guys a chance to go," said O'Neal, a gold medalist on the 1996 Olympic team and the 1994 World Championship team.

The USA Basketball selection committee plans to meet in the next several weeks to begin the process of finalizing a roster that already includes Bryant, Jason Kidd, Karl Malone, Jermaine O'Neal, Tim Duncan, Mike Bibby, Tracy McGrady, Allen Iverson and Ray Allen.

Kevin Garnett is a virtual lock for one of the open spots if he chooses to play, and Vince Carter and Elton Brand are expected to make the team after performing well at a qualifying tournament in Puerto Rico last summer. *AP*

Removing Buhain not the best solution

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

SEVERAL National Sports Association presidents, with the backing of POC president Celso Dayrit, have petitioned Malacañang asking for the resignation of Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain because of his "lack of concern and support," particularly in giving financial assistance to the NSAs. But will removing Buhain from the PSC the best solution to the problem? Many don't think so.

For example, where does these disgruntled NSAs propose to get funds if Buhain is ousted? Many doubt if these NSA officials would dig deep into their own pockets or expect to receive more funding from this cash-strapped government when, it is on record, that Congress even slashed the annual budget of the PSC from P105 million to P94 million last year, leading former PSC Commissioner and Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella to ask: "How can the PSC truly perform its duty when its budget, instead of being increased, was slashed?" The saddest thing, added Puentevella, is that people still expect us to win medals in international meets even after our lawmakers had virtually tied the PSC's hand with a meager budget.

Even Sen. Loren Legarda assailed the budget cut, stressing the bad effect it would have on national sports development.

On the other hand, Frank Elizalde, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) representative to the Philippines, said it's time the country's sports leaders unite even as he called on the government to place sports among its priorities. "We must get together and pressure the government to support sports to a great extent," stressed Elizalde. I made a similar plea a few years back when I wrote about the role of government in sports development, saying that in every country, whatever its political or religious persuasion, the government is responsible for the well-being of its people, notably the youth, including its national athletes.

I mentioned specifically that while the various departments like defense, education, health, finance and foreign affairs, among others, get huge budgetary outlays, sports does not, proving that it is regarded by the government as a poor relation and is treated as one. Sports will find it truly difficult to survive with the meager and irregular financial assistance provided to the PSC by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) and the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO).

NSA officials should learn to be self-reliant by raising their own funds instead of pestering the PSC for monetary assistance every so often. They should not depend on the government to promote their sports.

One can count on his fingers the few NSAs that are self-reliant and do not rely mostly on government for financial support. Among these are the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines led by Manny Lopez and supported by his father, the sportsminded and former Manila Mayor Mel Lopez, the track and field association headed by sports patron Go Teng Kok and the phenomenal badminton association led by former First Lady Ming Ramos. Of course, there are also individuals who do not bank on the government to promote their sports. Among them are brothers Jose "Popit" and Aristeo "Putch" Puyat, who have been bankrolling the world-famous Philippine Puyat Sports billiards team anchored on Efren "Bata" Reyes and Francisco "Django" Bustamante. Apart from billiards, the Puyats have also supported other sports, including bowling which produced four-time World Cup champion Paeng Nepomuceno.

The rift between the PSC and the NSAs is not only hurting sports in general, it is also leaving our national athletes demoralized, hampering their training for the 2005 SEA Games set here and their preparations for this year's Olympics in Athens starting in August. I am afraid that once our feuding officials fail to resolve their problems, they could eventually lose the respect of the athletes and the trust of the few remaining sponsors, leading Philippine sports to die sooner than expected. Why can't we all work together instead of spending our time attacking one another?

JW Golf Classic fetes Asia's best, 2 others

ASIA and Australia's biggest golf event recently feted three of the world's best players during the Johnnie Walker Golf Classic held at Bangkok's Alpine Golf and Sports Club.

India's Arjun Atwal was named the Johnnie Walker Asian Golfer of the Year for a majestic 2003 season, while Henrik Stenson's performance earned him a spot in the prestigious Diageo Championship on the European Tour in June

Australia's Adam Scott won the JW Young Golfer of the Year award after producing another impressive season in 2003 where he achieved a career breakthrough victory on the US PGA Tour.

Atwal, meanwhile, wrote several new pages in Asian golf history en route to winning the Order of Merit title in Asia for the first time in his career. He became the first Asian player to surpass US$1 million in career earnings with his victory at the Hero Honda Masters on home soil and capped a tremendous season by securing his US PGA Tour card in qualifying school.

The Johnnie Walker Golf Classic attracted some of the world's finest players and offered a total cash pot of one million pounds.

"By introducing a prize of this value, we are reflecting both the status of the event and the Johnnie Walker brand's unique Scottish heritage," said Vorathep Rangchaikul, president of Riche Monde (Bangkok) Ltd.

Henrik Stenson's 349-yard drive on the 14th hole during the third round of the Classic bagged his spot in Diageo. The 27-year-old Swede outdrove Ernie Els, Nick Faldo and Thomas Bjorn.

SPORTSWATCH

3 RP pugs bid for crowns in Bangkok

REIGNING Asian Boxing Council (ABC) flyweight champion Rolly Mandahinog and two other young Filipino boxers face world-rated Thais in separate championship fights in Bangkok, Thailand, on Feb. 20. Mandahinog will make his first title defense against Denburapa Ekarin, the same fighter he knocked out in the fourth round to seize the title, sanctioned by the World Boxing Council (WBC), on June 6 last year in Songkla, Thailand. RP No. 5 Philip Parcon and Federico Catubay will see action in the undercard, with Parcon challenging WBC minimumweight youth champion Olehdong Krathingdaeng Gym (Sithsamuechai) and Catubay making a bid at the WBC light flyweight youth crown of Saikalek Krathingdaeng Gym (Ekarin), said agent manager Leonil Lazarito of Valencia, Bukidnon. *Rey Danseco*

St. Stephen, Xavier fives forge title clash

ST. STEPHEN High School and Xavier posted contrasting victories in the penultimate day of eliminations to forge a titular showdown in the 28th MMTLBA at the Chiang Kai Shek gym. The league-leading St. Stephen crew and the defending champion Xavier clash on Wednesday with the former enjoying a twice-to-beat edge. St. Stephen secured the incentive by outclassing third running UNO (5-4), 71-61, while Xavier routed St. Jude, 88-46, to book a return trip to the finals. Kish Co hit 21 points for St. Stephen, whose lone loss was inflicted by Xavier at the start of the second round of eliminations. Justin Qua, meanwhile, fired 15 to lead Xavier's balanced offensive in its masterful conquest of lowly St. Jude. In the other game, Hope Christian High School pulled off a gutsy 86-82 overtime triumph over Chiang Kai Shek after both teams battled to 75-all in regulation. Jefferson Quingquing scattered 28 points to pace HCHS and win his scoring duel with CKSC's Lim, who had 25.

Int'l blindsports seminar set Feb. 21

A MEDICAL classification seminar for blind sports will be conducted on Feb. 21 to highlight the IBSA (International Blindsports Federation) Asia-Oceania Strategic Planning Conference at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati City. Facilitators for the first ever classification seminar here are IBSA medical director Dr. Georges Challe of France and Dr. Minguita Padilla, vice president of the Philippine Academe of Opthalmologists (PAO). "This (seminar) will benefit us because we will be able to utilize the participants in national and international competitions as well as our preparations for the hosting of next year's Asean Paragames," said PSC Commissioner Michael Barredo, IBSA continental delegate for Asia PSA head for Sectoral Concerns.

Clark hosts Petron beach volleyball

TEN teams will be seeing action in the 2004 Petron Ladies Beach Volleyball when the two-day first-quarter leg of the series gets under way on Feb. 21 at the Clearwater Country Club in Clark Field, Pampanga. Organized by the Volts Management Group, the quarterly tournament showcases the best in the ladies' beach volleyball scene. The teams will be divided into two groups of five teams each. The top two teams after the round-robin play advance to the crossover matches, with the winners forging a clash for the title. Former PSC Commissioner Tisha Abundo, executive director of VMG, said the tournament is open to collegiate and non-collegiate players. "Since the collegiate beach volleyball season has not yet ended, we welcome other players to join the tournament," said Abundo, herself a former volleyball player, during yesterday's PSA Sports Forum at the Manila Pavilion. *Trina Ibarle*

Fotogs hold bowling, billiards tilts

PHOTOGRAPHERS from camera clubs affiliated with the Federation of Philippine Photographers Foundation will hold bowling and billiards tournaments on Feb. 22, at the Bowling Inn on Taft Avenue, Manila. A highlight of Photoworld Manila 2004, the biggest and longest running photography event in Southeast Asia, the one-day sportsfest is expected to draw photographers from across the country. John Ching, PWM 2004 chair, said the two tournaments are open to all camera clubs and photo film suppliers.

Iriga bet tops MCC unrated chess

IRIGA City's Amir Esmaytan outwitted January champion Omar Hadji in 48 moves of a Sicilian Accelerated Dragon variation in the seventh and final round Sunday to rule the MCC Unrated Rapid chess held Sunday at the J&F Divino Bldg. in Quezon City. Esmaytan, an accountancy student at the University of Northeastern Philippines (UNO) who is ranked 26th in the tournament, wound up with 6.5 points from six wins and one draw to claim his first MCC Unrated title and take home the P3,000 top prize. Emil Valeza, another UNO student, outplayed Emil Cua in 36 moves of another Sicilian game to tie for second to third places with Ferdinand Palermo with 5.5 points. Valeza finished second after a tiebreak, with Palermo landing in third spot. Valeza and Palermo won P2,500 each.

Former PBA stars guests at AK7 tilt

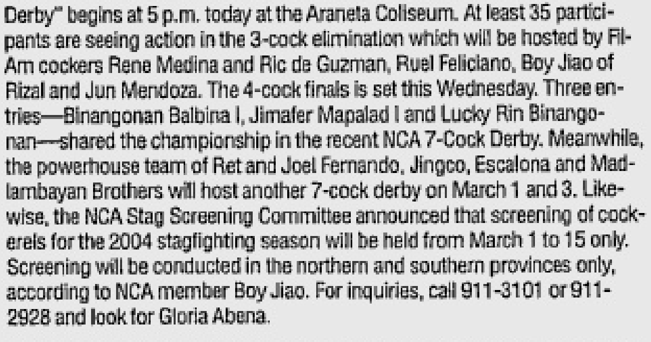
FORMER PBA stars Atoy Co, Samboy Lim, Lim Eng Beng and Freddie Hubalde as well as Bong Tan and Sunny Co were the special guests at the opening of the 1st AK7 Basketball Tournament on Baler Street., Barangay Bungad in Quezon City. The tournament, sponsored by AK7 Enterprises through board chair Achit Kaw, hopes to promote camaraderie and sportsmanship among architects, contractors, engineers and suppliers. The participating teams are Alpha7 Trades Inc. (A7), Kamel7 Systems Inc. (K7), Mirage Inc. (M7), Super7 Inc., CNK7, Amigo Steel Industries, Topway Construction and guest teams Shoe Mart (SM), Asya Design Partners and Boral.

NCA elims under way at Big Dome

THE ELIMINATION round of the National Cockers Association (NCA) 7-Cock Derby" begins at 5 p.m. today at the Araneta Coliseum. At least 35 participants are seeing action in the 3-cock elimination which will be hosted by Fil-Am cockers Rene Medina and Ric de Guzman, Ruel Feliciano, Boy Jiao of Rizal and Jun Mendoza. The 4-cock finals is set this Wednesday. Three entries—Binangonan Balbina I, Jimafer Mapalad I and Lucky Rin Binangonan—shared the championship in the recent NCA 7-Cock Derby. Meanwhile, the powerhouse team of Ret and Joel Fernando, Jingco, Escalona and Madlambayan Brothers will host another 7-cock derby on March 1 and 3. Likewise, the NCA Stag Screening Committee announced that screening of cockerels for the 2004 stagfighting season will be held from March 1 to 15 only. Screening will be conducted in the northern and southern provinces only, according to NCA member Boy Jiao. For inquiries, call 911-3101 or 911-2928 and look for Gloria Abena.

Pasay cockpit prepares for big Yu derby

PREPARATIONS are under way for another big 4-cock derby on March 10 at the air-conditioned Pasay City Cockpit, with Sagupaan B-50 Forten, Sagupaan Complexor 3000, Sagupaan Hammer and Sagupaan Mite Free Shampoo as sponsors. Prominent derby host Bobot Yu of Valenzuela said the event offers P300,000 to the winners. The entry fee is P8,800 and the minimum bet P5,500. Yu said that due to the big number of fights, the derby will start at 2 p.m. Participants may submit their entries on March 9, from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. only. For inquiries, call 816-6750, 843-1746 and 843-1890. Fifty-eight entries saw action in Yu's 4-cock derby promotion last Dec. 16 at the La Loma Cockpit. Meanwhile, the ASF Group 4-Cock Derby fires off on Friday.



LIKE FATHER: Father-and-son team of Rolly and Brendon Basco receive their prizes from National Sports Grill head coach (GM) Ponch Zamora (left) for topping the recent NSG Anniversary Family Billiards Tournament, a unique competition participated in by fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. The Bascos won a P25,000 Teak Wood Bench from True Value in the tournament also sponsored by Tabasco, adidas, C-Interactive, Nike, The Spa at RCBC, Nestle, Emerald Headway, Gold's Gym, GBX harbor Footwear, Parque España and Timex.

Fish sets up final duel against Roddick

SAN JOSE, California—Third-seeded Mardy Fish overpowered second-seeded Andre Agassi, 5-7, 6-4, 6-2, Saturday to advance to the final of the Siebel Open.

Fish will face top-seeded Andy Roddick, who beat wild-card entry Robert Kendrick, 7-6 (3), 6-2, in an earlier semifinal.

In Paris, world No. 2 Kim Clijsters of Belgium entered the final of the WTA Paris Open Saturday to book a final place against a rejuvenated Mary Pierce of France. Clijsters beat Dinara Safina of Russia, the younger sister of Marat, 6-1, 6-1, while Pierce subdued 16-year-old Russian Tatiana Golovin, 6-4, 6-0.

AP, AFP

Eagle lifts Daly to top in Buick

SAN DIEGO—John Daly ripped a big drive that set up a 30-foot eagle on the final hole Saturday for a 4-under 68 at the Buick Invitational, giving him a one-stroke lead over Stewart Cink.

DALY: Best chance AFP

It's Daly's best chance at winning on the PGA Tour since he captured his second major at the 1995 British Open.

Daly has made only one bogey in his two rounds on the South course at Torrey Pines, site of the 2008 US Open, and his short game kept him close to Cink until his length took over on the par-5 18th.

Daly was at 13-under 203, the first time he has had a 54-hole lead on the PGA Tour in 10 years.

Cink had a 71 and was one stroke behind, while Dennis Paulson made good use of his sponsor's exemption with a 67 that left him at 11-under 205.

Paulson, who lives 16 kilometers (10 miles) away, normally would be the hometown favorite Sunday, but he knows better.

Daly has been one of the most popular draws in golf ever since he crashed the scene in 1991 by winning the PGA Championship as the ninth alternate.

The fans love Daly's grip-it-and-rip-it style, and they relate to a common man with everyday struggles, including two divorces and two trips to alcohol rehab. The latest setback came a week after his son was born, when Daly's wife and her parents were indicted on federal drug and gambling charges.

That's about the time his game, which has seen so many peaks and valleys in his career, started turning around. He won the Korean Open last fall, along with the unofficial Callaway Invitational at Pebble Beach.

Daly has made three straight cuts for the first time since 2002, only now he has his eyes on a bigger prize.

There are still plenty of players within range, although Tiger Woods won't be one of them.

The defending champion was all over the South course again—in the bunkers, trees, anywhere but the short grass—hitting only five fairways on his way to a 72.

That left him eight shots out of the lead, and put in jeopardy his streak of finishing no worse than fifth every time he plays the Buick Invitational.

Davis prevails

In Port Stephens, Australia, Brian Davis birdied 10 holes in a 17-point final round Sunday to win the ANZ Championship by a point from fellow Englishman Paul Casey.

Davis, also the European tour's 2000 Spanish Open winner, finished with a stroke-play total of 16-under 272 and 44 points after four rounds.

Meanwhile, a golfer born in Adelaide as a man will create a world first by playing in the women's Australian Open next month, the Sunday Herald Sun newspaper reported in Melbourne.

Mianne Bagger had sex-change surgery in 1995 after a lifetime of feeling "something wasn't quite right," the newspaper said.

AP

Ex-Tour champion Pantani found dead

ROME—Former Tour de France winner Marco Pantani has died at the age of 34, according to media reports in Italy.

PANTANI AP

Italian news agency Ansa reported that his body was found in a hotel room in Rimini.

The cause of his death was still unknown, although police reports said no violence was involved.

The coach of the Italian national cycling team, Franco Ballerini, was quoted as saying: "It's something that is so huge, it doesn't seem true."

Pantani, a fine climber nicknamed "The Pirate" and who regularly wore colorful bandanas over his shaved head, won the Giro d'Italia in 1998 and then the Tour de France in the same year.

He was the first Italian to win the Tour de France since Felice Gimondi in 1965.

Reuters

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MILAN PG13 1:35, 4:10, 6:45, 9:20	HAUNTED MANSION GP 11:40, 1:40, 3:40, 5:40, 7:40, 9:40	MILAN PG13 11:40, 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00
MONA LISA SMILE PG13 12:00, 2:25, 4:50, 7:15, 9:40	WISHING STAIRS R13 12:45, 2:55, 5:05, 7:15, 9:30	CHASING LIBERTY PG13 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00

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3 ACADEMY AWARD
NOMINATIONS
BEST ACTRESS
Samantha Morton
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
Djimon Hounsou
BEST SCREENPLAY
Jim Sheridan, Naomi Sheridan & Kirsten Sheridan

MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13 (R-13)

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FAST RELEASE

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ALAXAN FR

Jaya joins 'Vagina'

THE "QUEEN of Soul" is now part of "The Vagina Monologues."

The role she plays in the critically acclaimed theater hit produced by Monique Wilson is yet another feather in the cap of Jaya.

'Vagina' enjoys a cult following in the Philippines, after seasoned stage, film and concert artists appeared in its commercial productions, tours, and fund-raising events.

Jaya has been recruited for the play's 2004 commercial run, following the likes of actresses Monique Wilson, Harlene Bautista Sarmenta and Pinky Amador, award-winning film and TV stars Gina Alajar, Angel Aquino and Angelu de Leon, singer Lynn Sherman, MTV VJ Belinda Panelo and theater veterans Tami Monsod, Dulce Aristorenas, Lara Fabregas, Arlene Borja and Pinky Marquez.

More popular for hits like "Sometimes You Just Know," "Dahil Tanging Ikaw," "Laging Naroon Ka," among other songs, Jaya is also a familiar face on television as one of the hosts of SOP.

Jaya first appeared in a fund-raising V-Day event of 'Vagina' last year, sharing a monologue with Mareng Winnie Monsod. She managed to bring the house down with laughter with her hilarious portrayal of a woman who had a good experience with a man.

For the play's 2004 run, Jaya will be performing crowd favorites like "Hair," "Vagina Workshop" and "Woman Who Loved To Make Vaginas Happy" alongside Tami Monsod and Jenny Jamora.

Performances at the Republic of Malate Theater are at 9 p.m. on March 18. 19 and 20, and a 4 p.m. Saturday matinee.

SHOW TIME

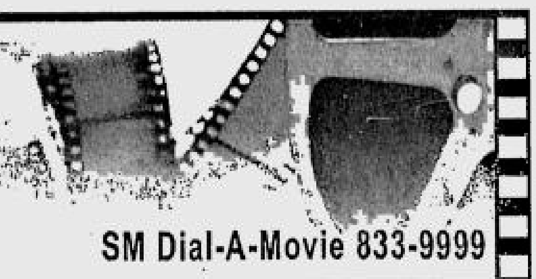
Cell phone horror

FROM the creative mind of the "Alfred Hitchcock" of South Korea, Ahn Byeong-Ki, comes "The Phone," a horror-thriller, which unveils a great mystery involving cell phones.

The story revolves around a magazine reporter who changes her number after receiving a barrage of obscene phone calls because of an article she had written.

The obscene calls stop, but the reporter begins to receive spooky calls. Things get worse when she visits her best friend whose daughter answers her phone.

"The Phone" is the first video version that is dubbed in Tagalog.



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9 MILAN
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9 MILAN
10 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
11 I AM DINA
12 BROTHER BEAR

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3 MAGIC KITCHEN
4 CHASING LIBERTY
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9 MILAN
10 MILAN
11 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
12 MAGIC KITCHEN

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12 MILAN

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6 STUCK ON YOU

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6 MILAN

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4 LAST SAMURAI

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MF/2:40/4:45/10:30
LFS/11:00 LMF/12:30
END

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LFS/11:00 LMF/1:00
END

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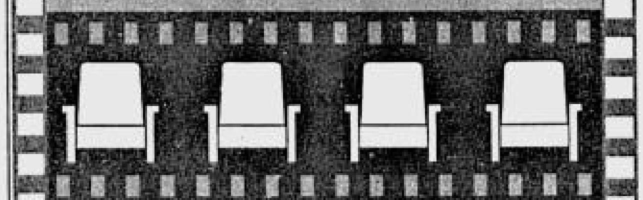

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2 CHASING LIBERTY	2 WISHING STAIRS	2 MILAN	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 MONA LISA SMILE 2:00	2 MILAN
3 MILAN	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 CHASING LIBERTY 12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30	Onstage REPERTORY'S FAME Feb. 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, Mar. 6 & 7	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 THE LAST SAMURAI 12:30 3:30 6:30 9:30	3 MILAN
4 HAUNTED MANSION	4 MONA LISA SMILE		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 CHASING LIBERTY 1:20 3:50 6:20 8:50 11:20	4 HAUNTED MANSION
	5 MAGIC KITCHEN		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 HAUNTED MANSION	5 MONAL LISA SMILE
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Runaway Jury marks the first pairing of Hollywood legends GENE HACKMAN and DUSTIN HOFFMAN.

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7 ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS

13 BRITISH ACADEMY FILM AWARD NOMINATIONS INCLUDING BEST PICTURE OF THE YEAR

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"STUNNING ENTERTAINMENT!"

JUDE LAW NICOLE KIDMAN RENÉE ZELLWEGER

COLD MOUNTAIN

FEBRUARY 18

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OPENS FEB. 18

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BENICIO DEL TORO	NAOMI WATTS

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BEST ACTOR
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WINNER
BEST FILM OF THE YEAR
BEST ACTOR
2003 National Board of Review

WINNER
BEST ACTRESS
2003 Online Film Critics Society

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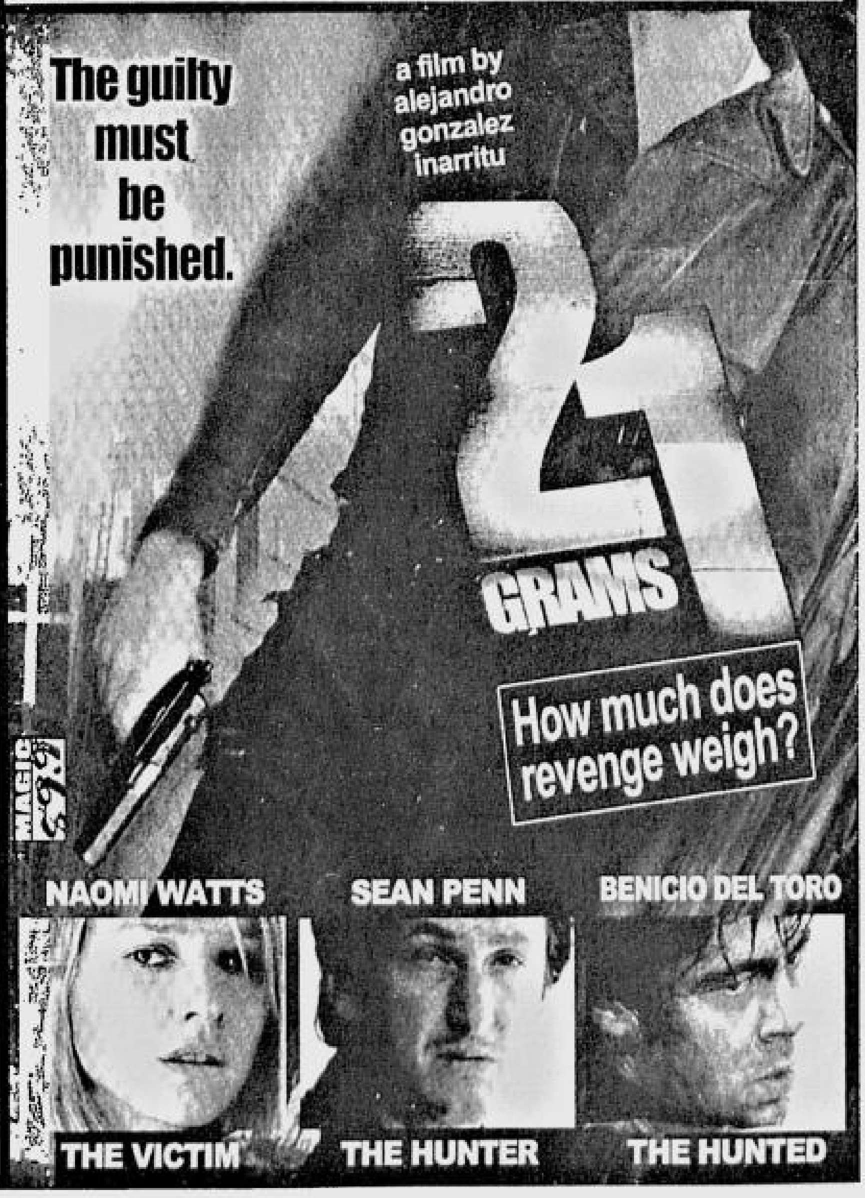
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Cinema	Movie	Times	
CINEMA 1 THX	HAUNTED MANSION	12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:30	
2	MILAN	11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50	
3	HAUNTED MANSION	10:45, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00	DTS
4	MAGIC KITCHEN	10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:10, 10:00	
5	CHASING LIBERTY	10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50	
6	THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE	11:20, 1:20, 3:20, 5:20	DTS
7	A GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE	12:30, 2:35, 4:40, 6:50, 9:00	
8	THE LAST SAMURAI	10:20, 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00	
9	MONA LISA SMILE	10:55, 1:35, 4:15, 6:55, 9:40	
10	WISHING STAIRS	10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50	

MATINEE: Monday to Friday/ 10 am-4pm except holidays
Matinee Price: P100 THX cinema / P75 for one level cinemas

ERMITA

526-7185 / 536-7809 to 12

Cinema	Movie	Times	
1	MILAN	11:10, 1:45, 4:20, 6:55, 9:50	DOLBY DIGITAL EX
2	MONA LISA SMILE	11:40, 2:10, 4:40, 7:10, 9:40	
3	GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE	11:05, 12:55, 2:45, 4:35, 6:25, 8:15, 10:00	DOLBY
4	WISHING STAIRS	10:10, 12:25, 2:40, 4:55, 7:10, 9:40	
5	MAGIC KITCHEN	10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:50	DOLBY
6	HAUNTED MANSION	10:40, 12:40, 2:40, 4:40, 6:40, 8:35, 10:00	DTS
7	CHASING LIBERTY	10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50	

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682-8193/99 / 682-8280

Cinema	Movie	Times	
1	MONA LISA SMILE	11:40, 2:00, 4:20, 6:40, 9:00	DOLBY
2	HAUNTED MANSION	10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00	
3	MILAN	10:10, 1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00	
4	CHASING LIBERTY	10:25, 12:50, 3:35, 6:20, 9:05	
5	MAGIC KITCHEN	11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10	
6	WISHING STAIRS	11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10	
7	MILAN	12:35, 3:25, 6:15, 9:05	DTS
8	GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE	10:50, 12:50, 2:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00	DOLBY

Big R Supercenter NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW

935-3229 / 31

Cinema	Movie	Times	
1	HAUNTED MANSION	11:00, 12:50, 2:45, 4:40, 6:35, 8:30	DOLBY
2	CHASING LIBERTY	11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:30	DOLBY
3	THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE	11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5:50, 8:20	
4	MONA LISA SMILE	12:00, 2:25, 4:45, 7:10, 9:00	
5	MILAN	10:10, 11:55, 2:40, 5:25, 8:15	
6	GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE	11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5:50, 8:10	
7	WISHING STAIRS	11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5:50, 8:20	
8	MAGIC KITCHEN	11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:30	

Citisquare MALABON

288-0985/2575

Cinema	Movie
1	THE HAUNTED MANSION
2	MILAN
3	CHASING LIBERTY
4	MAGIC KITCHEN

big Supercenter CAINTA

240-4661

Cinema	Movie
1	HAUNTED MANSION
2	MILAN
3	CHASING LIBERTY
4	MAGIC KITCHEN

Big R Supercenter STA. ROSA

Laguna (049)837-0907

Cinema	Movie
1	HAUNTED MANSION
2	MILAN
3	CHASING LIBERTY
4	IN THE CUT
5	MILAN

Big R Supercenter LIPA

757-3664 / 312-5870

Cinema	Movie
1	STUCK ON YOU
2	THE LAST SAMURAI
3	IN THE CUT
4	THE WISHER
5	MILAN

Big R Supercenter DASMARIÑAS

852-2125

Cinema	Movie
1	MONA LISA SMILE
2	MILAN
3	MILAN
4	CHASING LIBERTY
5	THE HAUNTED MANSION

Big R Supercenter STARMILLS

875-1927 / 961-5270

Cinema	Movie
1	MONA LISA SMILE
2	IN THE CUT
3	MILAN
4	MILAN
5	HAUNTED MANSION
6	STUCK ON YOU

IMUS

471-8188 / 875-5858

Cinema	Movie
1	HAUNTED MANSION
2	MAGIC KITCHEN
3	CHASING LIBERTY
4 DTS	GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
5	MILAN
6	WISHING STAIRS

BACOLOD

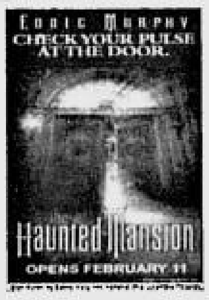
441-0458/59

Cinema	Movie
1	BROTHER BEAR
2	MILAN
3	STUCK ON YOU
4	SKY OF LOVE
5	THE TWINS EFFECT
6	THE LAST SAMURAI

ILOILO

336-8070/78

Cinema	Movie
1	BROTHER BEAR
2	MILAN
3	HAUNTED OFFICE
4	STUCK ON YOU
5	MEMENTO MORI
6	MILAN



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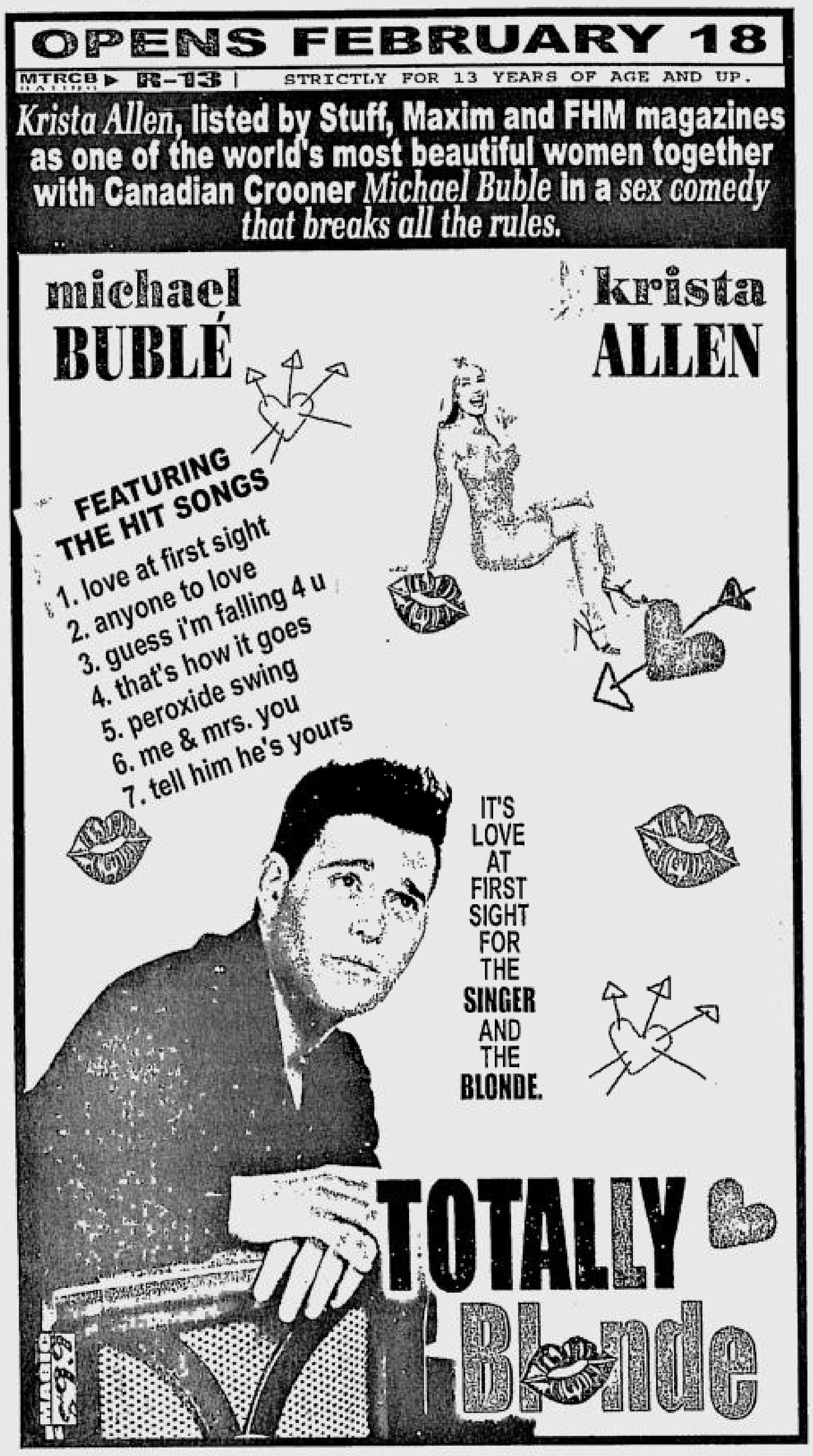

OPENS FEBRUARY 18

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michael BUBLÉ

krista ALLEN

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3. guess i'm falling 4 u
4. that's how it goes
5. peroxide swing
6. me & mrs. you
7. tell him he's yours

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OPENS FEB. 18

THEATRE MALL GREENHILLS

NOW SHOWING

CINEMA			
1	HAUNTED MANSION	11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 10:00	GP
2	CHASING LIBERTY	11:05, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50	P13

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DID YOU KNOW...

WHILE lovers **Ara Mina** and **Jomari Yllana** were dining at the newly opened Krua Thai Restaurant at the Megamall last week, **Troy Montero** and his girlfriend **Aubrey Miles** ate on separate tables and acted like strangers. Troy sat beside Jom, while Aubrey ate with **Annabelle Rama, Eddie Gutierrez** and their son **Raymond.** This prompted another diner to wonder why Troy and Aubrey were acting strangely when everybody in show biz knows they are together.

Araneta Center

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7	
Ali 1	MILAN
Ali 2	MILAN
Ali 3	THE HAUNTED MANSION
Ali 4	CHASING LIBERTY
Ali 5	LAST SAMURAI
Ali 6	MAGIC KITCHEN
Ali 7	THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

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FEB 18	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
FEB 22	PBA FIESTA CONFERENCE OPENING
FEB 25	PBA: RED BULL VS. TALK N' TEXT
FEB 29	PBA: TALK N' TEXT VS. SHELL
MAR 1	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
MAR 3	NCA 7-COCK DERBY

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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	POSSESSION / HUBOG
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	MILAN
B	
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	MILAN
CINEMA-2	LAST SAMURAI
CINEMA-3	GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MONALISA SMILE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	BROTHER BEAR
CINEMA-6	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSCRE
CINEMA-7	LOLLIPOP
CINEMA-8	IN THE CUT
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	CHASING LIBERTY
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HAUNTED MANSION
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	MAGIC KITCHEN
CINEMA-12	WISHING STAIRS
CINEMA-14	MILAN
CINEMA-15	MILAN
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PINAS)	LAST SAMURAI
CINEMA-1	MILAN
CINEMA-2	BROTHER BEAR
CINEMA-4	GATHERING
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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RESERVED SEATING

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1	MILAN	10:50, 1:40, 4:30 7:20, 10:10	PG-13
2	CHASING LIBERTY	11:20, 2:05, 4:50 7:35, 10:20	PG-13
3	HAUNTED MANSION	11:30, 1:30, 3:30 5:30, 7:30, 9:30	GP
4	MONA LISA SMILE	12:15, 2:55, 5:35 8:15, 10:50	PG-13

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Gov't debt burden swells to ₱3.36T

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE NATIONAL government's outstanding debt swelled by P540 billion or 19 percent to P3.36 trillion as of end-2003 from P2.82 trillion the previous year.

Data from the Bureau of Treasury showed that the level of the government's foreign debt accelerated more aggressively than its local borrowings.

Dollar borrowings in 2003 reached P1.65 trillion ($29.73 billion), up by P307 billion or 22 percent from P1.34 trillion a year ago while domestic debt rose by P232 billion or 15.8 percent to P1.7 trillion from P1.47 trillion in end-2002.

Comparing the December debt stock to the previous month's, however, the total borrowings eased by P4 billion or 0.11 percent from P3.36 trillion in November.

Domestic debt in December was lower by P17 billion or 0.98 percent from P1.72 trillion the previous month although foreign borrowings mildly increased from P1.64 trillion ($29.462 billion). The average exchange rate used in computing foreign debt improved to P55.55:$1 in December from P55.70 in November but was worse off from P53.05 in end-2002.

Last year's national government debt stock already exceeded the 2004 programmed level of P3.26 trillion. As of July, the government had already surpassed its debt stock target of P3.06 trillion for 2003.

Obligations of the government accounted for more than half of the Philippines' total debt stock of P5.39 trillion as of September 2003.

The national government's debt stock, however, excluded P708.5 billion in contingent liabilities or obligations that could become actual if the guaranteed agencies fail to pay their dues.

The level of contingent debt had increased substantially in 2003, indicating a burgeoning amount of sovereign guarantees that the government had given to state agencies as well as the private sector.

Relating the P3.36-trillion level of debt to population, each of the 82 million Filipinos account for a burden of about P40,914 outside of any personal obligations.

The government estimated that the country's outstanding debt would likely swell to about P7 trillion over the next five years before it could be reduced to a more manageable level.

The only consolation was that 89 percent of the country's foreign debt were to mature in more than five years and only 11 percent would fall due in a year.

The country's rising public debt was one of the reasons why rating agencies have downgraded their credit ratings on Philippine debt.

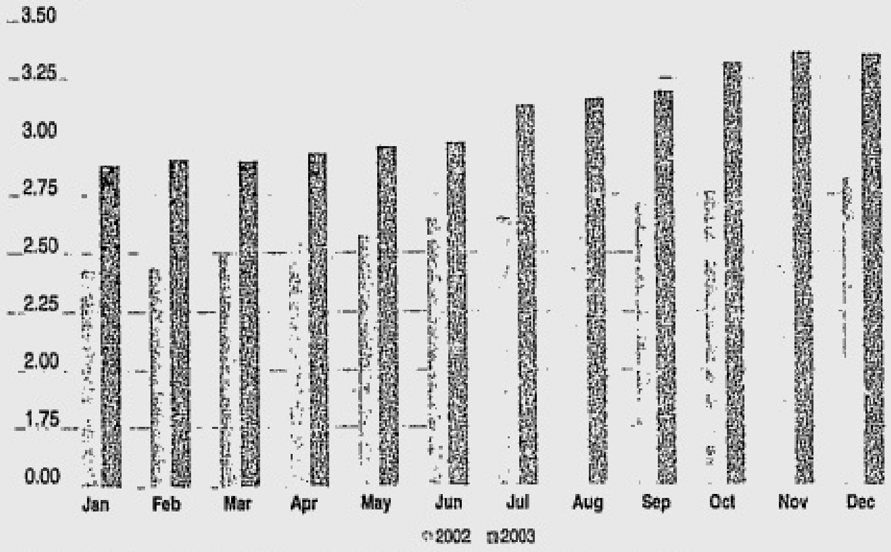
This year, the government would have to settle P542.2 billion in debts, up P116.5 billion or 27.4 percent more compared to P425.7 billion in debt servicing last year.

Interest payments of P271.5 billion this year would be P40.8 billion or 17.7 percent more than the P230.7 billion in 2003 while principal payments are up by 38.8 percent or P75.7 billion to P270.7 billion from P195 billion last year.

Debt service, as a ratio of gross domestic product, would increase to 11.6 percent this year from 9.9 percent a year ago and 9.1 percent in 2002.

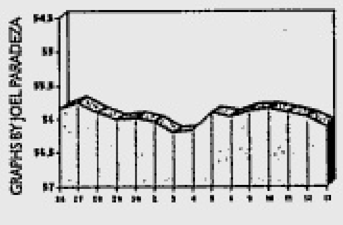
OUTSTANDING DEBT

January to December 2002 & 2003, in trillion pesos



INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

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As of 5 p.m., Feb. 13, 2004

¥105.39 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Feb. 13, 2004

GOLD: $411.30-411.80

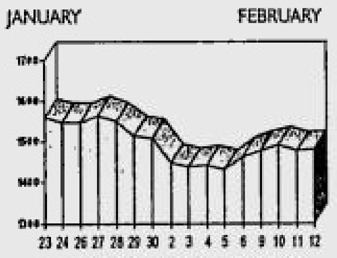
per ounce Hong Kong, Feb. 13, 2004

February 13, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.781067	1.000000	55.950000
Japan	Yen	0.007412	0.009489	0.530900
United Kingdom	Pound	1.478325	1.892700	105.896600
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.100533	0.128712	7.201400
Switzerland	Franc	0.634601	0.812480	45.458300
Canada	Dollar	0.592121	0.758093	42.415300
Singapore	Dollar	0.466615	0.597407	33.424900
Australia	Dollar	0.615692	0.788271	44.103800
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.071850	2.652590	148.412400
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.208290	0.266674	14.920400
Brunei	Dollar	0.465225	0.595628	33.325400
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000093	0.000119	0.006700
Thailand	Baht	0.020130	0.025773	1.442000
UAE	Dirham	0.212663	0.272272	15.233600
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.280300	71.632800
Argentina	Peso	0.267141	0.342021	19.136100
Brazil	Real	0.269520	0.345066	19.306400
Denmark	Kroner	0.134225	0.171848	9.614900
India	Rupee	0.017273	0.022114	1.237300
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.205571	0.263193	14.725600
Mexico	New Peso	0.071318	0.091308	5.108700
New Zealand	Dollar	0.545590	0.698519	39.082100
Norway	Kroner	0.113042	0.144728	8.097500
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013679	0.017513	0.979900
South Africa	Rand	0.117909	0.150959	8.446200
Korea	Won	0.000673	0.000862	0.048200
Sweden	Kroner	0.109332	0.139978	7.831800
Syria	Pound	0.015166	0.019417	1.086400
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023619	0.030239	1.691900
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000408	0.000522	0.029200

STOCK MARKET

Earnings reports seen lifting stocks

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B6)

LOCAL stocks are seen to continue on a consolidation trend this week as investors adopt a wait-and-see attitude to trading, in light of some corporate earnings reports due for disclosure in the coming days.

Last week, the main-share Philippine Stock Exchange composite index inched up 1.49 points, or 0.10 percent, to close at 1,480.77.

Companies expected to post favorable financial numbers within the week managed to pull the benchmark up despite the decision of the California Public Employees Retirement Fund (CalPERS) to keep the country out of its investment list.

Blue-chip issues Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and Jollibee Foods Corp. are scheduled to announce their 2003 financial results within the week. Both firms are expected to report better-than-2002 results.

"Investors will still look for fresh news to entice them to enter the market. Consolidation will likely be at the 1,450-1,500 level this week. Focus will be on PLDT and JFC, which are expected to affect the movement of the market and could eventually dictate (market trend)," First Grade Holdings Inc. managing director Astro del Castillo said.

Also, the start of the campaign period as well as the continuing uncertainty brought by the coming May polls are not expected to weigh the market down this week as investors' focus will be on the market-moving earnings reports of PLDT and Jollibee.

According to web-based Philstocks.net, the market would continue to experience some back-and-forth movements as the earnings season winds down and the election season starts to rage.

"Stocks are expected to continue on with its consolidation (this) week...The market may remain in this holding pattern for the rest of the month," it said.

As the investing community has not yet heard all of the presidential candidates' economic platforms, Del Castillo added that the effect of the campaign would hardly be felt in the coming days.

On CalPERS' decision to exclude the Philippines from its list of acceptable investment sites, he said this would be a "dampener" to market activity, but its real impact would not be felt until the United States' biggest pension fund makes its decision final.

The government is currently seeking representations with CalPERS to clarify some issues thrown against it, leading to its exclusion from the pension fund's investment list.

Del Castillo said investors' focus would be more on the fundamentals of certain firms, particularly those in the telecommunications sector, rather than on issues like the upcoming elections and the CalPERS decision.

BPI Securities Corp. also said in its web-based report that with generally positive results posted last year, investors' outlook for 2004 also remained rosy.

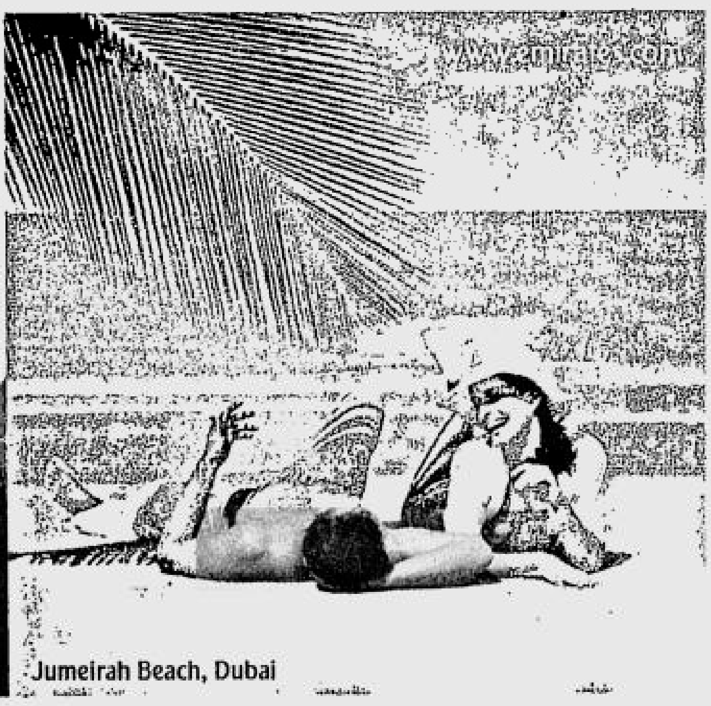
"We still see market corrections as an opportunity to accumulate. The market is likely to consolidate within the 1400 to 1500 range. Investors will take their cue from the 2003 earnings releases within the next two weeks," it said.

Abigail L. Ho

INTEREST RATES

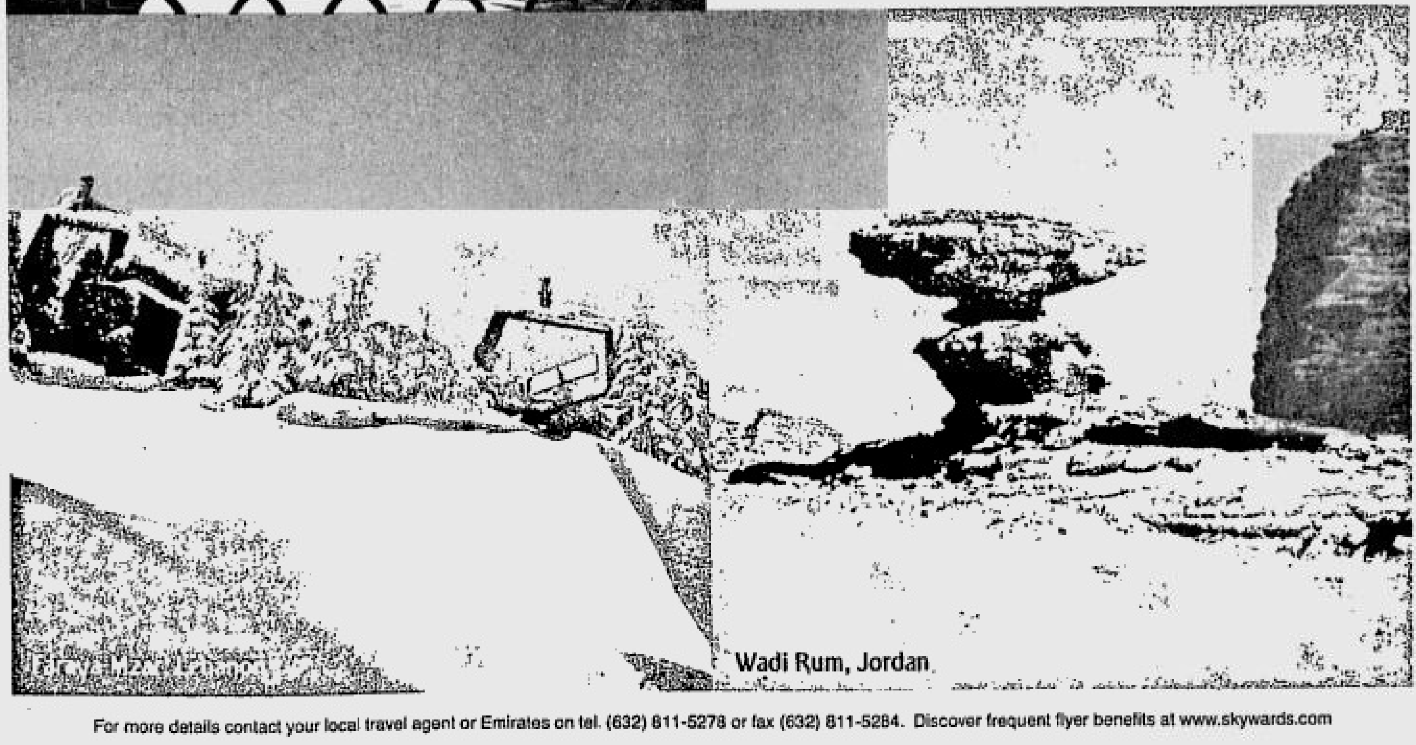
February 13, 2004- MART1 Rates Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 13-Feb-04	MART1 12-Feb-04
1 Month	6.7661	6.7661
3 Months	6.8321	6.8143
6 Months	7.9946	7.9732
1 Year	8.9304	8.9577
2 Years	9.7161	9.7214
3 Years	10.5696	10.5839
4 Years	10.8696	10.8714
5 Years	11.2125	11.225
7 Years	11.5429	11.5429
10 Years	11.7946	11.8214
20 Years	12.1857	12.1786
25 Years	12.4625	12.4554

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG



Jumeirah Beach, Dubai

Kasr El-Nile, Egypt



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RP sets last-minute attempt to convince CalPERS

By Clarissa S. Batino

A TWO-MEMBER delegation will mount a last-ditch effort to convince the California Employees' Retirement System or CalPERS to keep the Philippines on the list of permissible investment sites of the United States' biggest pension fund.

The Philippines scored 1.87 in the 2004 report to CalPERS submitted by Wilshire Consulting last week. While an improvement from 1.46 last year, the country's grade was still below the threshold of 2 set by the pension fund for the 27 economies eligible for investments.

Since 2002, the Philippines has failed to make it to CalPERS' grade but government officials managed to convince the pension fund to retain the country on the list. Last year, CalPERS gave the Philippines a one-year cure period to work out its differences with Wilshire on the scoring system.

The country's chances of being retained on the list would depend on CalPERS decision to either bring down the hurdle rate to 1.5 or to extend the cure period for the Philippines. Philippine officials said it would score higher if Wilshire would consider recent developments and other third-party sources.

eStandards Forum, a third-party source of Wilshire, had recently revised the Philippines' score in terms of compliance with international standards. From a grade of 19.23, the country's score improved to 40.77 and its ranking moved to 38 from 58 out of 83 countries evaluated by eStandards Forum, based on a Feb. 6 report.

Philippine Ambassador to Washington Alberto del Rosario and Finance Assistant Secretary Jeremias Paul will meet with CalPERS officials this week to present improvements in the country's legislative reform agenda and other developments that address concerns of Wilshire such as the issue of money laundering and the country's commitment to fight forced labor.

The CalPERs board will meet on Feb. 17 to decide where it would place more than $160 billion in assets it manages. Of the total, about $2 billion are in emerging markets.

While the influential US pension fund has placed only about $30 million in local stocks, its investment decision signals others to do the same.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong had written CalPERS on Feb. 11 to give an update on recent reforms that should increase the Philippines' score to 2 from 1 in the area of transaction cost. Amatong pointed out that Congress had ratified the rationalization of the documentary stamp tax.

"The implication of this development is that the stamp duty of P1.50 for every P200 par value will be abolished, thus enabling a stamp duty score of 3 instead of 1," according to Amatong.

She told CalPERS that Congress had also ratified the Securitization Act that would eliminate friction costs. Amatong also noted that contrary to perception, there was no capital gains tax on shares traded on the Philippine Stock Exchange, which should "increase the capital gains score for the Philippines to 3 from the current 2."

Amatong also cited other pieces of legislation that were either passed or ratified such as the Rationalization of Compensation of the Judiciary, the Optical Media Act, the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act, the Exemption of Banks and Other Professionals from VAT, and the Tax Treatment of Offshore Banking Units and Foreign Currency Deposit Units.

On money-laundering, Amatong told CalPERS that continued efforts were being made to remove the country from the Financial Action Task Force's watchlist.

Last month, the Anti-Money Laundering Council submitted to the Asia-Pacific Review Group of the FATF the implementation plan of the Philippines Anti-Money Laundering Act. Amatong said the recent effort "represents stage two of FATF's de-listing process."

Wilshire bases its scoring on third-party sources. Half of the score is based on market factors such as transparency, regulation and investor protection while the other half considers country factors like political stability, judiciary, labor and civil liberties.

eStandards Forum recognized improvements in the country's adherence to global standards in terms of accounting and auditing, corporate governance, effective banking supervision, effective securities regulation and fiscal policy transparency.

T-bill rates seen to rise, peso to ease

RETURNING volatility in the peso would prompt banks to bid higher in today's auction of P11 billion worth of treasury bills.

Traders said the government's cost of short-term borrowing could go up by about 20 basis points today while the peso would test the 56.20:$1 level anew within the week unless the government would move aggressively to cap the sustained increase in rates and the weakness of the local currency.

"The fixed-income market will take its cue from the spot currency market. If the peso moves down, it will mean that banks will demand a higher return on their money," a trader said.

The peso closed at 56.10 to a dollar last Friday with a total of $181.5 million traded. The local currency dropped back to the 56:$1 level a week after the central bank raised the reserve requirement on deposits and other liabilities by 2 percentage points to 19 percent. The increase in reserves should mop up P30 billion from the system.

"The peso could weaken to 56.26 to a dollar as political uncertainties continue to exacerbate the dollar supply problem in the market," said a treasury official.

When the peso is volatile, banks usually seek a higher return when lending to the government instead of using the money to buy dollars where they could earn more.

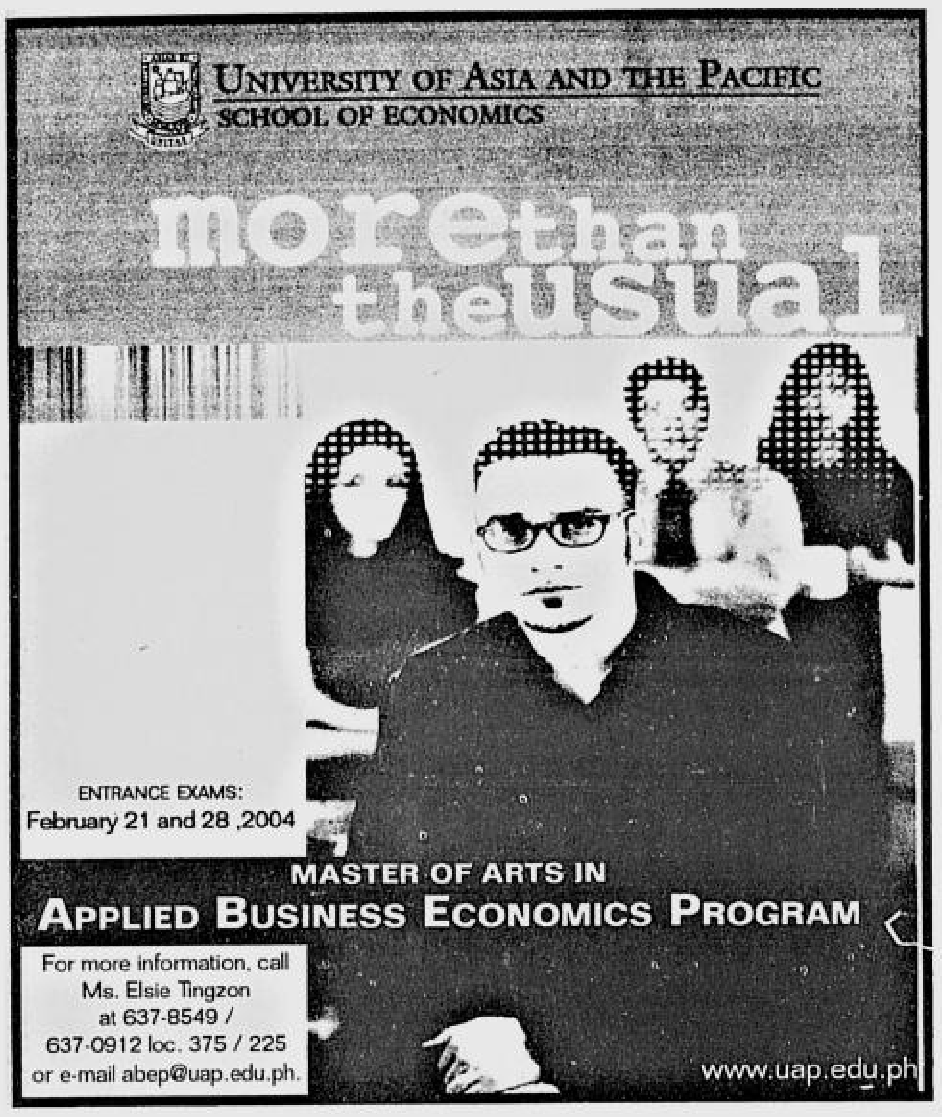
Last Friday, the secondary market was already trading at 6.8 percent for the 91-day treasuries while the 182-day and 364-day maturities were fetching bids of 8 and 9 percent.

The benchmark 91-day treasury bill rate, used by banks in pricing their loans, stood at 6.216 percent during the last auction. The 182-day yield was at 7.546 percent and the 364-day rate at 8.384 percent.

The auction committee led by the Bureau of Treasury could reject unreasonable bids considering that the government had just raised $120 million in new funds last Friday.

On the peso, the central bank had warned that it could raise overnight rates or banks' reserve requirement some more if the weakness of the local currency would persist.

But last week's inaction of the Monetary Board coupled with lingering political uncertainties brought the peso back to the 56:$1 level last Friday. *Clarissa S. Batino*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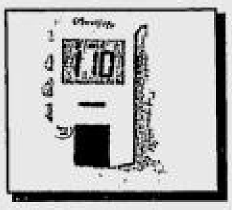
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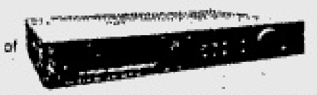

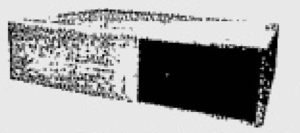

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Mazda vs Honda

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

COMEBACKING Mazda is apparently positioning itself against Honda.

You won't get this outright admission from Ford/Mazda group president Henry Co but per Mazda spokesperson Tonette Lee, Mazda's pricing will closely track that of Honda's.

Mazda6, the award-winning midsize sedan that the Japanese car company will formally launch tomorrow, will hover around P1.095 million as against Honda Accord VTI's P1.08 million.

Mazda apparently hopes to revive the brand by introducing first its higher-end models, a tactic previously employed by parent company Ford when it also relaunched its vehicles in the country after years of absence.

Even before tomorrow's launch, Mazda had already secured deposits from eager customers for 15 Mazda6 units as well as for 30 Tribute sports utility vehicles, which, with its "more upbeat, more refined city-driving" characteristics, will hopefully differentiate it from Ford Escape, with whom it shares a common platform.

Like Honda, Mazda apparently is veering away from the fleet-and-taxi market by choosing to locate its first dealer at the Quezon Avenue automotive row.

The franchise for the first Mazda dealership, at the corner of Quezon and Araneta avenues, had been awarded to Mike Cheng, who also holds the Ford Balintawak franchise.

During Mazda's absence, the Ford Balintawak shop has also been supplying 323, 626, Miata and other Mazda parts.

Although not ruling out a return of the Miata sports car, which has built a local cult following, Co referred only to the RX-8 and Mazda3 during his press conference last week as the two models that Mazda hopes to bring into the country toward the latter part of the year.

Co even gushed about the Mazda3, describing his excitement the first time he laid his eyes on it in Tokyo as "like getting his first car." He did not disclose what his first car had, been, but the mischievous grapevine said it was neither a Ford nor a Mazda.

Banking buzz

- GMA's K4 party is using the state-owned Land Bank to facilitate fund transfers to its provincial chapters. K4 even established a website, www.k4mdo.org, for this and other logistical purposes.
- The heirs of Senate President Gil Puyat, specifically Gil Puyat Jr. and Jesusa Puyat-Concepcion, are fighting an attempt of the GSIS Family Bank (the former ComSavings Bank) to foreclose on the late senator's minority shareholdings in Manila Bank.
- The Singaporean efficiency is rubbing off on Citystate, with the Filipino-Singaporean savings bank last month scoring a 99.73 efficiency status for Bancnet ATM system, topping established giants like Metrobank, Chinabank and United Overseas Bank.

US flak for FPJ

US EMBASSY PR consultant Jose Manuel "Babe" Romualdez has finally admitted to his Manila Golf Club colleagues that he has been helping the candidacy of actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Romualdez was accompanied by a US embassy cultural attaché during the Wednesday function at the Manila Golf when he made the admission, said former Manila Golf president and fellow Marcos disciple Rodolfo Cuenca.

Cuenca, who is fighting the government sequestration of his minority shareholdings in his former CDCP/PNCC empire, admitted he was also rooting for FPJ like Romualdez and Cuenca's balae, the former Senator Eva Estrada-Kalaw.

FPJ was the front-page cover of a PR-driven magazine controlled by Romualdez in December, shortly before FPJ announced that he was finally running for the presidency.

In addition to "helping" the US embassy, Romualdez's US lobbying firm Rhoads Maguire also obtained a $684,500 contract from the Philippine Department of National Defense to counsel the Philippine defense and military officials in their talks with Washington and Pentagon counterparts.

Heard through the grapevine

A TAGALOG anti-FPJ CD, similar to the anti-Erap CDs of popular tunes that surfaced during the impeachment hearings, is in the works, with production costs being underwritten by a prominent Makati-based family. *(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)*

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$5,000 AND UP

BSP seeks waiver on dollar deposits

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has ordered banks to execute a waiver of the deposit secrecy law with clients who would park for more than 3 days the dollars worth $5,000 or more that they bought from the banking system.

As part of ongoing efforts to plug loopholes in its foreign exchange regulation, the BSP has also required banks to present a "notarized copy" of import documents submitted by importers buying dollars to ensure that these papers were not being used to back up other dollar purchases.

While improving its regulation, the BSP also continued to crack down on speculators. Sources said that BSP examiners recently tracked down 3 foreign banks suspected of violating the central bank's currency regulations.

The central bank had tightened its monitoring of dollar transactions after the peso fell to a record low of 56.20 to $1 on Feb.3. Last Friday, the local currency closed at 56.10 to a dollar.

Although BSP officials kept on saying they have not seen any evidence of speculation, BSP field examiners have been watching at least 3 foreign banks suspected of hiding irregular dollar transactions in off-book accounts.

Sources said the 3 foreign banks refused to open their off-book accounts when BSP examiners went to investigate.

"The BSP examiners feel that these banks have been keeping their dollars purchased from the spot market in their off-book accounts. To some extent, this is where their offshore transactions are lodged," a source explained.

One foreign bank was caught with an off-book item bigger than its total resources, said a source.

BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said that banks were not allowed to accept for deposit the dollars worth at least $5,000 they had sold to clients although the funds could be parked for 3 days to facilitate transfers or payments.

This supports the BSP regulation allowing banks to sell dollars worth $5,000 and above only to clients with legitimate requirements. Banks' foreign currency deposit units or FCDUs could be a potential outlet of currency speculation.

"We will allow them to park for more than 3 days on condition that there is a waiver from the buyer (of the dollars). We just want to have a trail and avoid indefinite parking as well as repetition of payment," Reyes said.

The BSP had also ordered banks to present a "notarized" copy of the original documents on the bill of lading or invoice transactions used by importers to support their dollar purchases. Importers are the biggest buyers of dollars in the market.

Reyes said the stricter requirement was designed to avoid "duplication in the use of invoices and bills of lading" used to back up dollar purchases.

"We need some certification to the effect that the original documents were presented to the banks for payment," he said. The notarized copy must be authenticated by a "responsible and authorized official of the bank," such as the head of the treasury department or the bank's foreign exchange head.

The BSP would allow clients to park their dollars with the bank for no more than 3 days provided that a waiver is signed to allow monetary authorities to check if the money was eventually withdrawn or used to settle an outstanding obligation.

Reyes said the requirement for a waiver was contained in the circular-letter the BSP recently issued to remind banks that $5,000 and more bought from the banking system should not stay indefinitely in FCDU accounts.

The waiver is important because under the law, the BSP is prohibited from examining FCDU accounts as these are held in absolute secrecy.

Reyes said without a waiver, banks must not allow the funds to be kept in their vaults even for a short-term deposit. He noted, however, that FCDU deposits were stable at about $12.9 billion the previous week.

An increasing level of dollar deposits signals a stable capital flow but volatile movement in FCDUs could also indicate some currency speculation.

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P880M IN BACK TAXES

SMC disputes BIR ruling

By Abigail L. Ho

FOOD and beverage conglomerate San Miguel Corp. has cried foul over the Bureau of Internal Revenue's decision to charge it an additional P880 million in back taxes, insisting that San Mig Light was an entirely different brand and not just a variant of an existing product.

"For the BIR to tax San Mig Light as a variant would be a reversal of the product's registration and tax classification through the years as a new brand and as subject to a tax rate of P9.15 (later P10.25) per liter, which is a matter of record and which the BIR has confirmed both in writing and by approving tax payments on removals of San Mig Light on the basis that it is a new brand," the company said in a letter to the BIR.

The BIR earlier ruled that San Miguel should remit P1.2 billion worth of taxes for San Mig Light, retroactive since the product's launch in 1999, as this was a variant of the popular San Miguel Pale Pilsen brand.

But the tax-collection agency revised its computation to P880 million after using the San Miguel Pale Pilsen in Can as a basis for taxation. The BIR used the All-Malt brand, which had already been pulled out of the market, as the basis for its earlier computation.

Whatever tax computations the BIR had made, however, would not be honored by San Miguel as it continued to stand firm in its position that San Mig Light was not a variant but an entirely separate brand.

Under the Tax Code, a variant is defined as a brand to which a modifier is added as a prefix or a suffix to an already existing brand in the market. This should also bear a logo or design that is the same as the root brand.

San Mig Light, argued San Miguel, did not at all share the same name, logo and design with Pale Pilsen or any other existing San Miguel brands, for that matter.

"San Mig Light has a distinctive and different inscription and name shape, color scheme, size, packaging and general appearance," the letter stated.

Also, the conglomerate said the BIR's ruling to tax the beer brand retroactively would "go against the spirit of the prohibition against retroaccivity of any revocation, modification or reversal of a ruling or circular promulgated by the BIR commissioner if the same will be prejudicial to the taxpayer."

Election spending

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

NOTWITHSTANDING all the uncertainty before us, everyone expects our economy to perk up this year, especially in the first half of it, even if only because of one single event, which is the May 10 national elections. What makes elections so good for the economy? Or is it really?

As everyone knows, a lot of money goes around the economy in the months leading up to the election itself.

This is money coming out of fat bank accounts here and abroad whether hidden or unhidden, out of government coffers, out from underneath mattresses and hidden treasure chests, and yes, even from illegal money printing machines (expect to see more of those fake currency notes going around in the next several weeks!).

This is money that buys campaign posters and streamers, radio and TV spots, newspaper ads, transport services for candidates and their entourage, T-shirts and caps emblazoned with candidates' names, show business personalities' talent fees, hotel and other lodging accommodations, food and meals consumed and given away during the campaign... I'm sure you can add quite a few more to the list.

And up until the election ban takes effect (although that hasn't necessarily stopped people), it of course includes money spent for rushed infrastructure projects—preceded, naturally, by those prominent billboards with all the names of the generous politicians who have "gifted" us with these oh-so-vital facilities that they had always owed us in the first place.

One percentage point

How much additional spending can we reasonably expect to come about because of the elections? Let's begin with the campaign itself. No one can really estimate this with any degree of precision, but we can at least try to get a ballpark estimate. A good starting point would be the authorized campaign expenditures provided by law.

The law says that the presidential and vice-presidential candidates are allowed to spend at most P10 per voter, the other candidates P8.

With 43 million voters reportedly registered, this means P430 million per candidate. Assuming only four big-spending tandems, this would mean about P3.4 billion. It is probably conservative to estimate that actual expenditures will be twice that amount—never mind that it's against the law—so I'd say about P7 billion will be spent by the presidential and vice presidential candidates alone.

Without going into the details of my back-of-envelope calculations for the rest of the roughly 60,000 candidates running at all levels, I conservatively estimate another P18 billion, giving a rough total of about P25 billion in overall campaign spending.

This is worth about one percentage point of GDP (which was the figure given by Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri during the budget hearings.) Add to this another several billion pesos in rushed infrastructure spending at all levels (i.e. those that would not have normally been undertaken if not for the upcoming elections).

This would lead me to expect the GDP growth rates for the first two quarters to be about one percentage point higher than what it would normally be.

The past record

The question is, what would it have "normally" been? Over the past few quarters, growth in the industrial sector, which includes manufacturing as its dominant part, has actually been on a slowing trend.

From a robust 4.1-percent growth in the first quarter of 2003, it had slowed down to 1.2 percent by the last quarter. For manufacturing, the numbers were 5.3 percent for the first quarter, down to 3.2 percent in the last. Our Ateneo Macroeconomic Forecasting Model (AMFM) gives us a "steady-state" growth rate at this time of 2.7 percent, which can roughly be interpreted as the growth rate we would attain if we do nothing at all, i.e. a business-as-usual scenario.

All told, I would expect to see a GDP growth rate of around 4 percent in the first two quarters, or possibly more depending on how much I am underestimating actual campaign spending above.

Reviewing the data for the last two election years (1998 and 2001), one finds that election spending then was more of a savior than a stimulant to the economy.

Growth rates in domestic output in the first two quarters of 1998 were 1.1 and -1.0 percent respectively, and for 2001 were 2.9 and 3 percent respectively.

In 1998, not even the election spending could offset the depressing effect of the regional financial crisis. In 2001, election spending probably averted what could have been much worse economic performance given the world slowdown and the impeachment crisis we had just emerged from.

The downside

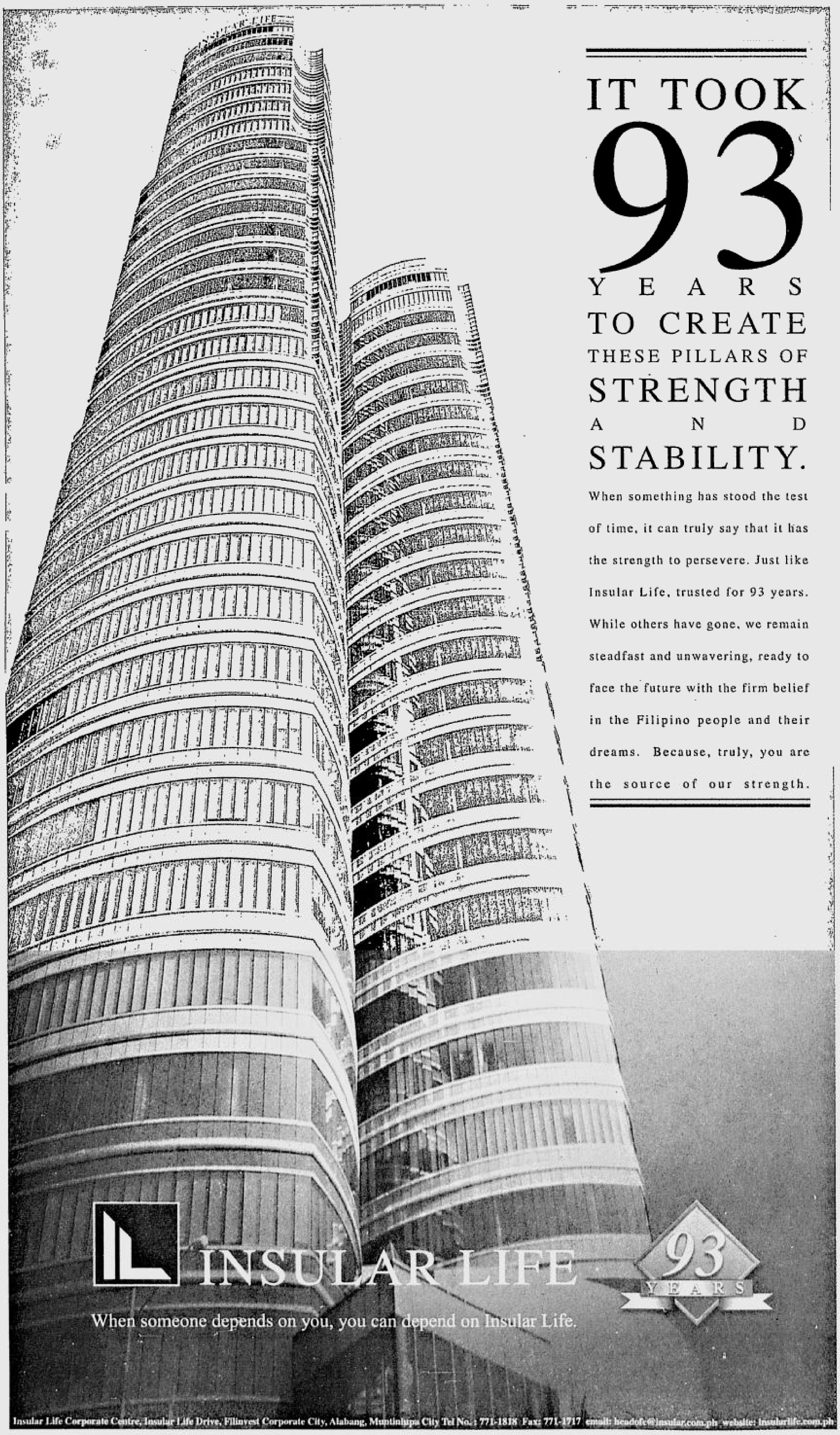
It is not all good that election spending brings, especially at this time. Such higher spending, especially by government, normally leads to a stronger upward pressure on prices, particularly if it leads the government to a larger budget deficit.

What makes the situation worse at this time is that even ignoring the elections, price increases have already been speeding up for other reasons, not the least of which is the rapid peso depreciation.

Added to higher import tariffs due to recent policy reversals, rising petroleum prices and transport costs, reduced smuggling (which does have the disadvantage of restricting supplies of cheap goods—not that I am condoning it!), rising interest rates, and likely demands for higher wage rates.

With all of that, I would expect inflation rate in 2004 to go up by more than just one percentage point.

Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu



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AIR TALKS WITH CHINA

RP seeking stopover rights

By Abigail L. Ho

PHILIPPINE negotiators may allow Chinese carriers to fly to another country from the Philippines in exchange for stopover rights.

Civil Aeronautics Board executive director Tomas Mañalac said Philippine carriers wanted rights to service key cities of Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, including the right to carry passengers picked up during stopovers in any one of these places to another point in China.

"In return, the Philippines could give fifth freedom rights to China so that its carriers could fly to South Korea, Japan and Europe from the Philippines," he said.

The Philippines and China are scheduled to discuss these possible arrangements during negotiations next month.

In an earlier interview, Philippine Airlines Inc. president and chief operating officer Avelino Zapanta said having stopover rights in China would help boost local carriers' passenger traffic as well as revenue.

"We want them (Chinese negotiators) to allow us to make a stopover from Shanghai to Beijing. There's a huge traffic in Shanghai, where there are a lot of business establishments and tourists," he explained.

He said PAL would want to be allowed to carry traffic to Shanghai, then after three or four days, fly those same passengers to Beijing.

Cebu Pacific vice president for corporate planning and external affairs Peggy Vera said in a telephone interview that air talks with China on March 2 and 3 would deal more with additional rights than an increase in capacity entitlements.

She explained that the capacity entitlements under the existing air service agreement between the two countries were still sufficient at 5,000 seats apiece.

Local carriers are now using only 3,000 of those 5,000 seats granted under the agreement. PAL is currently the lone airline that has scheduled flights to China. Cebu Pacific flies to China only on a charter basis.

Manalac said in an earlier interview that the Philippines was keen on cementing a new deal with China because of the route's potential.

China, because of sheer size, made it to the Philippine negotiators' priority list of governments to forge air agreements with.

However, talks with another big market, India, would have to be shelved as the Philippine air panel was currently preparing for a meeting on regional open skies with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on Feb. 27 and 28.

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Brownouts on the horizon

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

THE HORIZON is plunged in darkness—literally. By 2007, brownouts will be hitting Luzon and there is little that can be done to prevent it. And the situation will get worse before it gets better.

In order to assure consumers of a steady and reliable supply of electricity, the generating capacity of the Luzon grid, or any grid for that matter, must be, at the very least, 20 percent in excess of peak demand. This excess capacity, or standby power, must be readily available to take care of any unscheduled outages. Civil society complained about this excess supply. Why are we paying for electricity not being generated, they screamed.

Assuming a modest 5 percent annual increase in demand, Luzon's excess generating capacity, now at about 40 percent of peak demand, will be down to the critical 20 percent by 2007. After 2007, the excess capacity will dip below the 20 percent threshold.

We will then have worse brownouts than those we had about a dozen years ago. This is because no new plants have been commissioned for the past few years and none is scheduled to be operational by 2007.

Visayas and Mindanao will be in a worse situation. Even now, these areas are already being hit by brownouts.

And so, if you still have your small generating unit that you bought during the brownouts a dozen years ago, better be ready to dust it off soon. And you will need to keep those voltage regulators to your personal computers and other office machines and household appliances in good repair.

The Philippines is really pressed for time. Natural gas-fired plants are preferred because they generate cheaper electricity, and we have the resources. But, from conception to commissioning, it takes about six years to put a gas-fired plant into operation.

The problem is worsened because the Philippines cannot get the funding for new plants, or attract independent power producers to jump in. This is due to what is called the regulatory risk, meaning the government keeps changing policies. It is also because there are fewer foreign players nowadays.

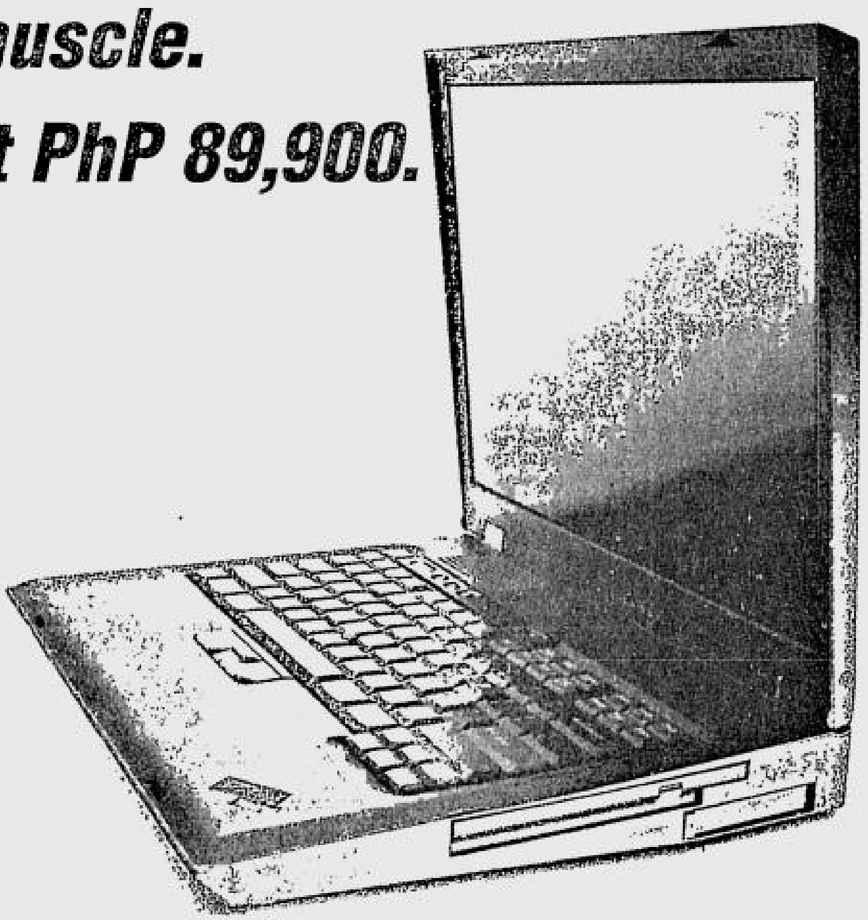
To make up for the drop in excess capacity, Napocor will probably put up diesel plants. These take only about three years to put up, but they are more expensive to run. The diesel plants now forming part of the Luzon grid are run as peak load plants, meaning they are run only during peak hours. But after 2007, diesel plants may have to be run for longer hours, which raises everybody's electric bills.

Those civil society groups, who complained about high electric bills because they included the cost of power plants while not in use, will have their wishes come true. There will be no more excess power supply. Instead, there will be brownouts, which should make civil society happy.

Prolonged brownouts always worry the insurance industry. A lot of things—fire and robbery to mention only two—happen in the dark.

Finally, these brownouts will result in a higher birth rate, throwing economic planning out of the window.

Whoever will be our president next June, his/her first job will be to solve the looming power crisis. He/she will not have a moment to lose.



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IBM

Global Holdings plans to go into iron ore exploration in RP

By Michelle V. Remo

GLOBAL Infrastructure Holdings Ltd. is considering venturing into iron ore exploration in the Philippines.

The move will complement its steel production business in the country. GIHL earlier won the right over the assets of National Steel Corp. It had recently started rehabilitation work on NSC's plant in Iligan.

According to a government source, GIHL wants to engage in an iron ore exploration project to ensure the availability of raw materials for NSC's operations. Iron ores are raw materials to steel manufacturing.

"GIHL wants to see our prospects for iron ore. If they can source the product locally, it will help boost their competitiveness," said the source who requested anonymity.

He added that at least $1 billion would be needed to establish a basic iron steel facility and another $50 million for exploration activities.

Currently, the country is importing iron ores from Australia and Brazil although reports said there are iron ores available in the mountains of Sierra Madre in Laguna. The absence of investors willing to explore iron ores here forces the country to import.

The intention to go into exploration in the Philippines is part of the plan of the Ispat Group, the holding company of GIHL, to increase its sources of raw materials around the world. Last year, Ispat has reportedly started a feasibility study on conducting iron ore exploration in India.

The rehabilitation of NSC formally began Feb. 3 after GIHL, the winning bidder for the NSC, signed a memorandum of agreement with the steel firm's creditor-banks. NSC shut down operations in 1999 due to debts amounting to P16 billion.

GIHL committed to pay NSC's creditor-banks P13.25 billion, of which P1 billion will be paid in cash and the bulk will be paid over a period of eight years. The group of creditor banks is headed by the Philippine National Bank, which has a majority stake in the NSC.

The reopening of the Iligan-based steel plant was hailed by the government as a big leap toward industrialization. The NSC is expected to contribute P4 billion to the country's gross domestic product and P1 billion in taxes to the national government.

Its reopening is also expected to boost Iligan City's economy as the NSC is projected to contribute P157 billion in taxes to the local government and is set to hire 400 former employees of the NSC.

PSE ELECTIONS

Coyiuto seen challenging Arroyo camp

By Doris C. Dumlao

AFTER a two-year hibernation, veteran broker Robert Coyiuto is again set to run for the chairmanship of the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Sources from the Coyiuto camp said on Friday that the former PSE chair would seek to challenge incumbent chair Alicia Rita Arroyo, who is expected to launch a reelection bid.

Sources said that among those supporting Coyiuto's bid were former PSE chairs Trina Kalaw and Felipe Yap.

Other broker-nominees being considered to run under the Coyiuto ticket are all former PSE governors/directors—Filomeno Francisco, Eddie Gobing, Edwin Luy Francis Chua, Ismael Cruz and Joey Roxas.

The group will also endorse at least two independent or non-broker nominees—Omar Cruz formerly an executive of Citibank and publisher Napoleon Rama.

Coyiuto ran for the PSE chairmanship two years ago, but lost to arch-rival Vivian Yuchengco who was supported by the majority of the non-broker representatives.

As mandated by the Securities Regulation Code, at least eight out of the 15-member PSE board must be non-brokers.

Last year, both Coyiuto and Yuchengco did not run for office as part of a truce brokered by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Coyiuto's camp—whose standard-bearer last year was Filomeno Francisco— pulled out of the elections over disagreements over the nomination of non-broker representatives. As such, the first annual meeting held by the PSE to elect its directors failed to form a quorum.

This year's annual PSE stockholders meeting will be held on March 13.

PSE posts ₱10M in net income

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange posted P10 million in net income last year, just about a third of what it earned the previous year, due to lower revenue from company listings.

PSE vice president for finance and corporate information Marietta Tan said the local bourse generated significantly less revenue in 2003 as there were only a handful of initial public offerings conducted last year.

In 2002, the PSE chalked up P28 million in net profit, 53 percent higher than the P18.3-million net income posted in 2001.

However, with the local bourse's dependence on listing fees for the bulk of its revenue, income fell drastically in 2003 as the volatile economic and political situation prevented companies from pursuing plans to offer a part of their shares to the public.

"For this year, we're very hopeful. We're hoping to (increase our revenue)," she told reporters.

At the start of the year, the PSE reimposed transaction fees on all trades to help augment its waning revenue.

The transaction fees are expected to rake in an additional P6 million to P12 million in annual revenue for the local bourse. This assumes an average daily market value of between P250 million and P500 million.

With the transaction fees in place, every P500 million in value turnover per day will mean an incremental income of P50,000 for the PSE.

The PSE is on its way to full demutualization or conversion into a stock corporation in an effort to beef up its business and make its shares more attractive to investors.

In line with this, the PSE last week completed the sale through private placement of more than 5.2 million new shares worth around P629 million to five institutional investors.

These investors include the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. Beneficial Trust Fund, San Miguel Corp. Retirement Fund and Government Service Insurance System, which bought 1.3 million apiece, as well as Kim Eng Investment Ltd. and KE Strategic Pte. Ltd., which bought more than 650,000 shares each.

PSE president Cayetano Paderanga Jr. said around P200 million of the proceeds would be invested in technology and another P200 million would be lent to the Clearing and Trade Guaranty Fund.

BIR's annual large taxpayers campaign starts

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue (BIR) feted the country's top corporate taxpayers recently, during the grand launching of the Large Taxpayers Service (LTS) Annual Taxpayers Campaign for 2004.

Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno lauded these large companies for their prompt payment of taxes, adding that they had contributed 55 percent of the BIR's total revenue of P423.5 billion in 2003.

"The LTS accounts for at least half of the yearly revenue target of the BIR. Its collection in 2003 reached P232.8 billion, or at least 55 percent of our total collection amounting to P425.3 billion," Parayno said.

The top five awardees are San Miguel Corp., Fortune Tobaco Corp., Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Corp. and Phillip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc. (PMPMI).

BIR statistics showed that SMC paid a total of P16.2 billion; Fortune, P13.7 billion; Petron, P9.6 billion and Phillip Morris, P8.36 billion.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 13, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	16,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17	17	17	17	7,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	44.5	45	44.5	45	982,900
China Banking Corp.	660	660	660	660	220
Citystate Savings Bank	16	16	16	16	200
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	39	39.5	39	39	28,700
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.54	0.56	700,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	25.5	26.5	25.5	26.5	1,413,000
Philippine National Bank	24	24	23.75	23.75	9,800
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	35,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13.5	14	13.5	14	13,500
Union Bank of the Phil.	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	1,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	2000	2020	2000	2020	870
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	188	189	119	121	100,610
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1520	1520	1520	1520	280
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	23.25	23.75	23.25	23.5	26,500
Globe Telecom Inc.	890	890	880	885	4,370
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	800,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.039	0.039	0.038	0.039	1,200,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.38	1.6	1.38	1.58	51,053,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.38	1.38	1.36	1.36	103,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	960	960	940	940	236,050
Ivantage Corp.	0.35	0.38	0.35	0.38	120,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	4,900,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	19.5	19.5	19	19.5	38,000
Manila Electric Co. B	31.5	32	31.5	32	339,800
Petron Corp.	3.45	3.6	3.4	3.55	9,631,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.26	1.26	110,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,350,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp	1.58	1.58	1.58	1.58	45,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.12	666,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Jollibee Foods Corp.	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	112,200
San Miguel Corp. A	55.5	55.5	55	55	480,000
San Miguel Corp. B	68	69	67.5	69	122,500
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	500,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.31	110,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	20,000
Ayala Corp.	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	1,807,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	7,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	9,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.56	1.56	1.56	1.56	50,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.64	0.66	0.63	0.64	25,040,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.19	0.17	0.19	500,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1	1	1	60,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	24	24	23.5	23.75	600,700
Global Equities Inc.	0.06	0.065	0.06	0.065	300,000
Ionics Inc.	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42	119,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	210,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.06	1.1	1.06	1.08	5,368,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.3	0.31	0.29	0.29	12,360,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	6,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	100,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	14,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.24	0.27	0.24	0.24	220,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	3,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1	1	1	1	10,000
Pryce Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	500,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	100,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.48	0.49	0.48	0.48	440,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	40,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	100,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.3	0.3	70,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	16,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	23.25	24	23.25	23.5	357,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series N	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	7,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	4,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	19,100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	6,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,300
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,400
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	401,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	300,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	1,640,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	530,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.08	1.1	3,116,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.04	2.04	167,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.9	6	5.9	6	1,438,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.225	0.23	0.225	0.23	2,250,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.28	0.3	0.28	0.29	4,250,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	3,000,000
Polar Mines & Dev't Corp.	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	300,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	600,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	110,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	3,309,580	101,178,225.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	129,406,720	447,187,930.00
PRO	7,593,000	15,092,520.00
Mining	10,510,000	2,069,550.00
GRAND TOTALS :	150,819,300	565,528,225.00
AVERAGES		
Bank & Fin Svc	438.38	UP 3.34
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,291.42	UP 3.53
PRO	544.04	DOWN 3.90
Mining	1,607.15	UP 25.47
OIL	1.26	UNCH 0.00
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	946.38	DOWN 2.59
Composite	1,480.77	UP 1.49

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Quedancor gets credit lines

By Christine A. Gaylican

COMMERCIAL banks led by Equitable-PCI Bank are set to open additional credit lines worth P4.8 billion for Quedan Rural Credit and Guarantee Corp. (Quedancor)

The other participating banks are United Coconut Planters Bank, Philippine Veterans Bank and Land Bank of the Philippines. The extension of credit line to Quedancor can be considered a form of compliance by the banks with the Agri-Agra Law.

Buying or investing in commercial papers issued by Quedancor, which is engaged in agricultural production, processing, storage and marketing activities for small farmers, is another form of compliance with the Agri-Agra Law.

"The opening of the credit lines will allow more funds to flow into the agricultural sector," said Quedancor president Nelson Buenaflor in an interview last week.

Of the total amount of credit lines, P2 billion will be opened by Equitable PCI Bank. However, Buenaflor said details of the credit facility from Equitable PCI were still being finalized.

Quedancor posted a net income of P50 million last year, up by 100 percent from the previous year's P25 million.

The state-run agency's earnings grew as commercial banks coursed more resources for the agency's re-lending. It registered an average repayment performance of 95 to 97 percent.

BIR January collection hits ₱35.6B

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue collected P36.56 billion in taxes last month, P1.88 billion or 4.9 percent short of the P38.44-billion goal for January.

Preliminary data from the BIR, however, showed that last month's collection was 7 percent higher than the P34.17 billion collected in the same period last year.

Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. said January is usually a lean month for collections. In 2003, collections only started improving in April.

"We could be a bit short of the target but this is not worrisome because I recall that last year, we were substantially behind our goal and even lower compared to the previous year. And yet we met and even exceeded the full year target," said Parayno in an interview.

Although the economic team agreed to reduce the BIR's full-year collection goal to P476.3 billion from P488.6 billion, the BIR must still increase its collection this year by about 12 percent from P425.3 billion last year.

The BIR said that excise taxes dropped during the month by about P1.5 billion, primarily due to lower collections from the oil industry.

The BIR said all its 19 regional offices registered an increase of about P2.5 billion or 17 percent.

"Like last year, the BIR expects to recoup this shortfall in the coming months as more revenue generating measures are being lined up and prepared for implementation," said Parayno.

The Bureau of Customs fared a little better, with its P9.285 billion in January collections exceeding the P8.5-billion goal for the month by 9.2 percent.

The Customs' income, however, was lower than the P9.616 billion collected last year.

The BOC must deliver P110.58 billion to state coffers this year. The economic team raised the agency's collection goal by about P5 billion after collections last year reached an all-time high of P106.056 billion.

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CANLUBANG GOLF CLUB	400K	
CAPITOL HILLS GOLF CLUB		140K
CELEBRITY SPORTS CLUB	170K	
CLUB FILIPINO	140K	130K
EASTRIDGE GOLF CLUB "B"	190K	-
EAGLERIDGE GOLF CLUB "B"	280K	-
FILIPINAS GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB	300K	-
FONTANA "D"	50K	please call
MAKATI SPORTS CLUB "A"	180K	please call
MANILA GOLF CLUB (Ind.)	please call	9.7M
MANILA GOLF CLUB (Corp.)	-	10.8M
MANILA POLO CLUB	-	2.3M
MANILA SOUTHWOODS "A"	please call	
MANILA SOUTHWOODS "B"	530K	500K
METRO CLUB	80K	
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ROCKWELL CLUB	330K	280K
ROYALE TAGAYTAY	60K	
SHERWOOD HILLS GOLF CLUB "B"	-	100K
STA. ELENA GOLF CLUB "A"		1.1M
TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS	775K	
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Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	1,150,000	1,400,000
Baguio Country Club	650,000	700,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	-	60,000
Camp John Hay	-	220,000
Canlubang	400,000	450,000
Canyonwoods	-	150,000
Capitol Hills	120,000	150,000
Cebu Country Club	1,200,000	Please Call
Celebrity Sports Club	150,000	200,000
Club Filipino	-	170,000
Eagleridge "A"	200,000	270,000
Eagleridge "B"	-	280,000
Eagleridge "C"	-	400,000
Forest Hills "A"	-	180,000
Forest Hills "B"	-	190,000
Forest Hills "C"	-	250,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	-	200,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	-	250,000
Manila Golf (Corporate)	10,800,000	-
Manila Golf (Individual)	9,500,000	10,500,000
Manila Polo	2,200,000	2,300,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	350,000	430,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	500,000	550,000
Manila Yacht Club	-	400,000
Metroclub "B"	-	90,000
Mimosa (Individual)	-	170,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	250,000	275,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	170,000	250,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	-	400,000
Orchard Golf Club "A"	-	140,000
Quezon City Sports Club	Please Call	200,000
Sherwood Hills "A"	-	70,000
Sherwood Hills "C"	-	200,000
Rockwell	-	380,000
Spa & Lodge	520,000	600,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,150,000	1,500,000
Sta. Elena "B"	1,350,000	-
Subic Bay Yacht (Corporate)	150,000	180,000
Subic Bay Yacht (Individual)	-	120,000
Tagaytay Country Club	300,000	340,000
Tagaytay Highlands	750,000	850,000
Tagaytay Midlands	650,000	750,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	100,000	140,000
Valle Verde (Corporate)	200,000	250,000
Valley Golf	250,000	300,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	6,500,000	-

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Alabang Country Club A/B*	-	1,150,000
Baguio Country Club	-	650,000
Canyon Woods	-	120,000
Capitol Hills	160,000	130,000
Calatagan Golf Club A/B**	70,000	-
Club Filipino	-	120,000
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	290,000*	-
Eastridge A/B*	-	70,000/80,000*
Evercrest	-	Pls. Call
Fontana D/C*/A**	70,000/140,000*/230,000**	-
Manila Golf Ind./Corp.*	-	9,500,000
Manila Polo	2,400,000	2,100,000
Makati Sports Club A/B*	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Manila Yacht Club	550,000	-
Manila Southwoods A/B*	430,000	-
Metropolitan Club	110,000	-
Mimosa Golf Ind./Corp.*	-	120,000
Mt. Malarayat Ind./Corp.*	300,000*	-
Orchard Golf A/B*	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Punta Fuego	-	Pls. Call
Riviera Golf A/B*	120,000	160,000*
Royale Tagaytay A/C*	Pls. Call	-
Sherwoods A/B*/C**	-	100,000*
Subic Bay Yacht Club "Corp"	Pls. Call	-
Tagaytay Country Club	-	300,000
Tagaytay Highlands Golf & CC	830,000	-
Tagaytay Midlands	680,000	-
The Country Club	2,000,000	-
Valley Golf & CC	290,000	-
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Fairways & Blue Waters	-	320,000
Fontana "D"	-	100,000
Forest Hills "A"	130,000	-
Forest Hills "B"	-	170,000
Manila Polo	2,100,000	2,300,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	-	230,00
Makati Sports Club "B"	-	250,00
Punta Fuego	400,000	pls. call
Orchard "B"	210,000	-
Riviera "B"	100,000	110,000
Riviera "C"	-	180,000
Rockwell Club	280,000	325,000
Sherwoods "A"	-	100,000
Sherwoods "B"	100,000	-
Tagaytay Highlands	pls. call	-
Tagaytay Midlands	650,000	-
Tagaytay Country Club	300,000	-
Wack Wack Golf Club	6,300,000	-

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Gov't planning another global bond issue

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PHILIPPINES is planning to go back to the global bond market within the first quarter to raise part or all of its external financing requirement for the year worth $680 million.

"We are studying a new global bond issue. The longer the term, the better," said Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong.

Last Friday, the government raised $120 million from the sale of bonds falling due in 2011. It also swapped short-term and more expensive borrowings with $1.18 billion worth of new seven-year bonds.

Inclusive of the recent bond sale and the funds generated in late 2003, the government was able to raise so far $1.17 billion of its $1.85 billion external financing requirement this year.

The finance chief pointed out that the first quarter was historically a good time to sell debt papers because the market was usually liquid. The Philippines is the largest Asian sovereign debt issuer outside of Japan.

"If it is favorable to issue now, then we will do it soon. If not, we will likely do it after the elections," Amatong added.

Amatong said it had helped that the bond market had already discounted the downgrading of the country's credit rating by Moody's Investors Service last month and the Philippines' possible removal from the list of permissible investment sites of California Employees' Retirement System or CalPERS.

The finance chief said the cost of the recent bond issue was reasonable considering the recent developments.

The $1.3-billion bond sale and swap extended the maturity of the country's foreign debt by 2.7 years, according to National Treasurer Sergio Edeza

Amatong said the successful bond sale reflected the continued confidence of investors in the Philippines.

"This also shows that the government's efforts in improving its liability profile are bearing fruit. All these efforts will strengthen the country's financial position," said the finance chief.

The government said it had reduced the debt level in 2006 by $323 million, in 2008 by $252 million, in 2009 by $336 million and the remaining Brady bonds by $315 million.

At the same time, the country was able to release $28 million in US treasuries which backed the Brady bonds sold in the early '90s. Although long-term in nature, the Brady bonds were expensive because it had required a collateral that allowed investors to terminate their placements any time.

SECURITY BANK

SECURITY BANK'S SELLING AGENTS
Security Bank has signed up Banco de Oro Capital and Investment Corp., ING Bank NV and Multinational Investment Bancorporation as selling agents for its P2.5-billion Tier 2 subordinated notes issuance. The offer was more than 100 percent oversubscribed. (From left) Banco de Oro Capital and Investment Corp. EVP Eduardo V. Francisco, ING Bank NV managing director and head of financial markets Consuelo D. Garcia, Security Bank Corp. president and CEO Alberto S. Villarosa and Multinational Investment Bancorporation president Cesar B. Crisol signed the agreement recently.

Court order on mining seen driving away investments

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry is worried that the recent court decision declaring the provisions of the Mining Act unconstitutional may discourage the entry of huge foreign investments into the mining industry.

Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima said he was hoping the Supreme Court would reverse its decision because of the billions of dollars worth of investments that the country might eventually lose if the ruling prevailed.

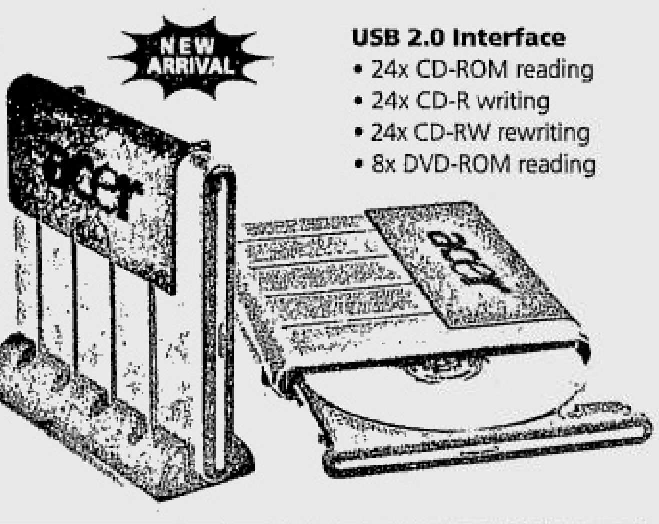
The mining industry earlier estimated that it might generate initial investments worth $4.5 billion once the issue on the legitimacy of mining operations of foreigners was addressed. The industry also said it could generate $2.5 billion in annual exports when the government's development agenda for the industry was fully operational.

The country currently earns a measly $500 million in mineral exports per year, which is significantly lower than the estimated $1.2 billion generated every year during the 1980s.

With the recent SC ruling, the industry is apprehensive it could hardly accomplish the growth projections they set earlier. Purisima, however, said there could still be a chance that the SC would reverse its decision, considering that the decision was not unanimous.

Voting 8-5-1, the Supreme Court on Jan. 29 declared unconstitutional several provisions of the Republic Act No. 7942, also known as the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.

The decision meant that the granting of financial and technical service agreements (FTAAs), which allows foreign firms to conduct exploration and development of the country's minerals, was against the constitutional provision barring foreigners to own the country's natural resources.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US trade gap widens; consumer confidence down

WASHINGTON—The US trade deficit widened nearly 11 percent in December as strong US economic growth pulled in record imports and exports inched lower despite a weaker dollar, a government report showed on Friday.

The monthly trade gap hit $42.5 billion, well above the $40 billion analysts had forecast.

The December figure pushed the 2003 trade shortfall to a record $489.4 billion, up 17 percent from 2002.

Meanwhile, a closely watched survey of consumer sentiment was sharply lower in early February, showing Americans turned increasingly cautious on the economy. Analysts say weak jobs creation has dampened consumer confidence despite a strengthening US economy.

The University of Michigan index of consumer confidence slumped to a surprisingly low 93.1 in February, reversing January's hefty rise to 103.8.

"A 10-point drop in the confidence index is significant and suggests there is a new pessimism among consumers that was not there a month ago," said Chris Low, chief economist at FTN Financial in New York. "I suspect it has something to do with three surprisingly weak employment reports in a row," referring to the Labor Department's closely watched monthly employment report.

The near-record December trade gap pushed the dollar lower initially as traders fretted that the currency's 13-percent fall against a basket of currencies since early 2002 was not enough to fix global trade imbalances. However, later on Friday the dollar recouped its losses on profit-taking in euros.

The sharp fall in consumer confidence sent US Treasury prices higher as investors saw it as a sign the Federal Reserve would be in no rush to raise interest rates.

The two-year Treasury note firmed in price, taking yields down to 1.68 percent from 1.71 percent late on Thursday.

But the consumer confidence data took a bite out of stock prices as a possible harbinger of slower economic growth.

The Dow Jones industrial average ended down 66.22 points, or 0.62 percent, at 10,627.85, while the broader Standard & Poor's 500 Index closed down 6.30 points, or 0.55 percent, at 1,145.81.

The burgeoning trade deficit has weighed on the US dollar, which has the potential to create inflationary pressures as Americans pay more for imported goods.

"(The data are) suggesting the decline we've seen in the the dollar over the last couple of years is not having an impact. It suggests the dollar may still need to fall to help narrow the trade deficit. But there's a risk to higher inflation if it does," said Gary Thayer, chief economist at AG Edwards & Sons in St. Louis.

A separate Labor Department report showed the price of imported goods rose sharply in January, a sign the weaker dollar may finally be making itself felt on the price end.

US import prices rose 1.3 percent last month, the biggest climb since February 2003, after a 0.5 percent advance in December. Wall Street had forecast a milder 0.4-percent gain.

In testimony last week to Congress, Fed Chair Alan Greenspan seemed comfortable with the dollar's decline, saying foreign companies had so far been able to absorb the impact. He said the weaker currency would also help contain the trade gap as foreign producers export less to the United States.

Analysts said the larger-than-expected trade deficit could require the government to trim its estimate of fourth-quarter economic growth, currently pegged at 4 percent. *Reuters*

Cingular ups AT&T offer

PHILADELPHIA/LONDON,—Cingular Wireless on Friday raised its offer to buy smaller rival AT&T Wireless Services Inc., while rival Vodafone Group Plc pored over a potential bid that could value the No. 3 US wireless company at $35 billion, sources familiar with the situation said.

After the deadline for the bidding passed, details of Cingular's sweetened offer were not immediately available. But sources familiar with the bid said the price topped Cingular's initial offer of $30 billion, or $11 a share.

It was not clear whether Vodafone Group Plc had pulled the trigger on its bid, but one source familiar with the talks said the company had mulled over an offer as rich as $35 billion, or about $12.50 a share.

Vodafone, Cingular and AT&T Wireless declined to comment.

NTT Docomo Inc., which owns 16 percent of AT&T Wireless, on Friday decided against submitting a bid after determining it lacked the staff or bulk to realistically acquire and operate a company as large as AT&T Wireless, one source said.

Redmond, Washington-based AT&T Wireless plans to review the bids on Saturday and spend the President's Day holiday weekend pouring over the details, and a decision could come as early as next week, sources said.

But analysts and traders said AT&T Wireless had no reason to rush and may wait until its self-imposed Feb. 29 deadline, especially since the two suitors may return in the coming days with sweetened offers if they realize they were outbid.

"Why rush to a decision? Make them sweat it out and worry whether or not they won and see if you can get them to come back with better offers," said one arbitrageur, who declined to be named.

Hopes of a bidding war sent AT&T Wireless shares to 12-month highs of $11.98, valuing the group at $32.56 billion. The stock closed at $11.82, up 15 cents, or 1.29 percent, on the New York Stock Exchange, where it was the most actively traded stock.

The heated interest in AT&T Wireless comes even as the company recently suffered an unexpected fourth-quarter loss and warned that technical and customer-service problems would lead to drop in customers throughout the first half of 2004. *Reuters*

A MAN holds a bouquet of roses while walking on a Beijing street. The popularity of St. Valentine's Day on Feb. 14 is growing in stride with China's fast-changing economy after more than two decades of economic reforms.
AFP PHOTO

Opec shows no sign of cutting overproduction

LONDON—Opec members have shown no sign of meeting their pledge to stop 1.5 million barrels per day of over-production, with March crude allocations to key customers unchanged from those for February, traders said on Friday

Trade sources named Iran and Kuwait as the latest Opec members to have kept supplies steady, despite the cartel's announcement in Algiers on Tuesday that it would eliminate production above Opec's official output ceiling with immediate effect.

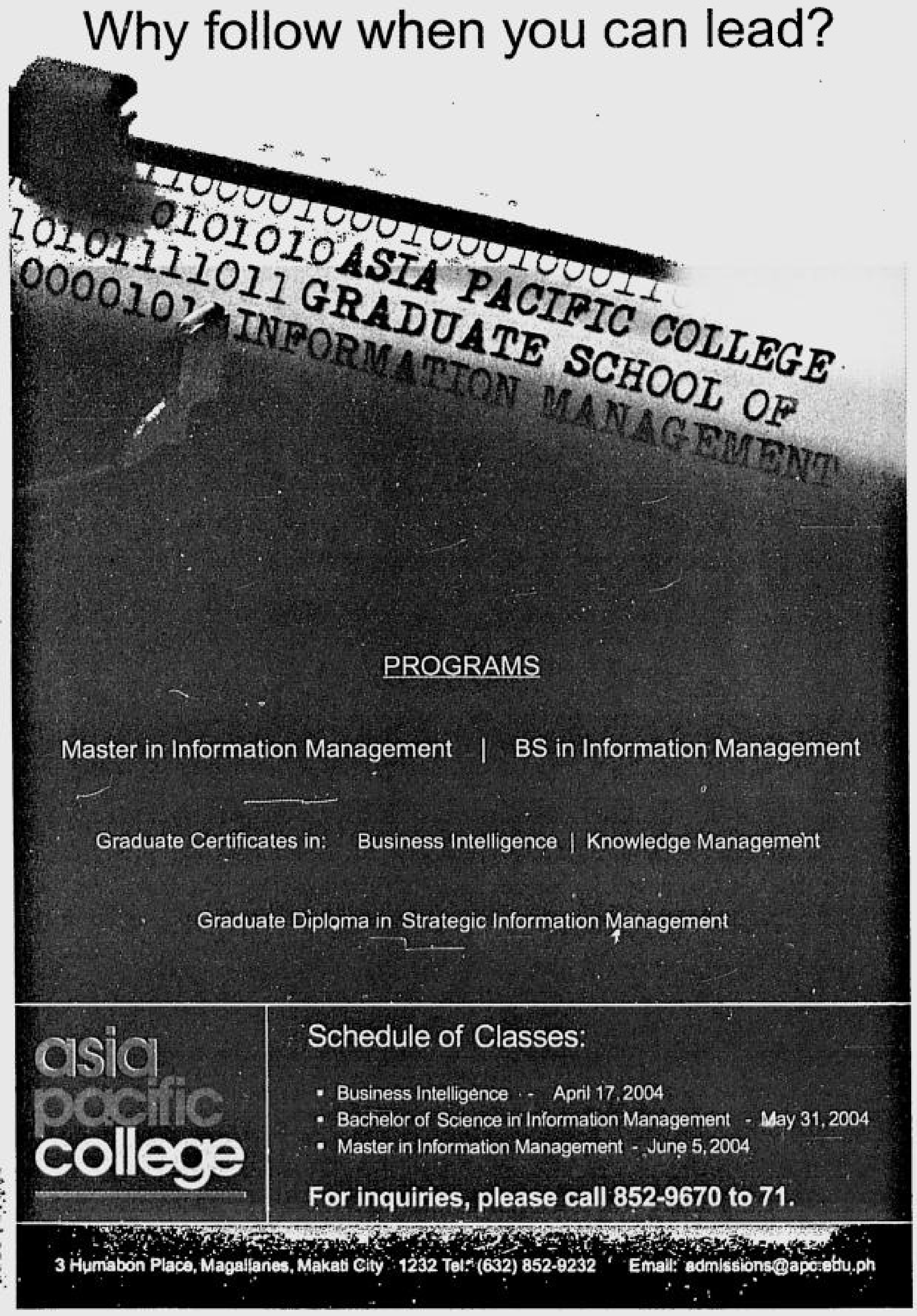
Customers of Saudi Arabia in Europe and Asia said this week they expected March supplies to be unchanged from February levels, while oil traders said it would be very difficult for Nigeria to reduce March oil availability because most of it had already been sold.

Sales from the United Arab Emirates to their main customers in Asia also were unchanged.

"I haven't had any communication which says production will be coming down," said one trading source at a Nigerian producer.

Oil producers typically must give customers about 20 days notice of monthly supplies. March volumes are now being set.

Tuesday's Opec meeting in Algiers attempted to fend off a possible price collapse in the second quarter with the announcement it would cut official quotas by 1 million barrels per day to 23.5 million bpd, effective April 1, in addition to the promised action to stop over-production. *Reuters*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Mitsubishi seen posting big loss

TOKYO—Japanese car maker Mitsubishi Motors Corp is likely to post a group operating loss of around 100 billion yen ($949.3 million) this year on poor sales of new cars in North America, a newspaper said on Saturday.

Mitsubishi's profitability was hit by stiff price competition in North America, where the Big Three US car makers and others had cut prices, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun said.

The likely 100 billion yen group operating loss for the year ending March 31 would be worse than the firm's projection for a loss of 45 billion yen, the newspaper said.

The car maker posted a profit of 82.76 billion yen a year earlier, it added.

Officials at Mitsubishi Motors, 37 percent owned by DaimlerChrysler, could not immediately be reached for comment.

Nihon Keizai said Mitsubishi Motors was seeing a recovery in Europe, where its profit was being pushed up by the strong euro.

Another plus was that sales had been growing in Asia outside Japan, the newspaper said.

But it said the firm's group net loss could rise from its current estimate of 11 billion yen due to the poor performance of its core business. Mitsubishi Motors posted a group net profit of 37.36 billion yen in the year to March 31, 2003.

The car maker could also incur an additional losses linked to its restructuring efforts, the newspaper said. *Reuters*

Wall St. investors' fancy turns to merger talks

NEW YORK—Merger talk is in the air, and thoughts of corporate consolidation are likely to occupy investors' minds this week, as the earnings season winds down and traders look for fresh reasons to push the market higher.

Cable operator Comcast Corp.'s unsolicited $50 billion takeover bid for media giant Walt Disney Co., a deal that would create the world's largest media company, stirred up speculation about a comeback in deal making and put Wall Street on watch for the next mega-marriage.

Unexpectedly strong quarterly earnings reports and heavy hints from Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan that interest rates are likely to remain low for some time to come have underpinned investor sentiment. But after the market's substantial climb over the past two months, concerns have mounted that most of this good news is already factored into current stock prices.

"You've gotten to a point now where it's hard to squeeze out much better earnings without a much stronger economy," said Rick Meckler, president of investment firm LibertyView Asset Management.

Merger and acquisition activity, he said, may help keep investors' interest in buying stocks piqued.

In addition to the Disney deal, the world's top wireless operator, Vodafone Group Plc, and US rival Cingular have squared off for a $30 billion-plus bidding war to gain control of AT&T Wireless ahead of a late Friday deadline.

That came on the heels of Bank of America Corp.'s bid for FleetBoston Financial Corp. late last month.

More deals of this kind mean corporate managements are more comfortable with their own business operations and feel that their companies' shares are fairly valued, said Jack Caffrey, equity strategist at J.P. Morgan Private Bank.

"It's indicative of a healthier overall financial and operating environment," Caffrey said. "That can translate into managements' willingness to spend more money on capital and, ultimately, spend more on labor."

While corporate America is expected to pick up the spending baton from consumers, whose shopping habits helped ease the pain of the latest economic downturn, some economists worry that sluggish employment growth could leave consumers with empty pockets.

Reports on consumer and producer-level prices in January will likely get a yawn unless they diverge widely from expectations, analysts said, since Greenspan's comments reassured the financial markets that the Fed isn't ready to take back some of the stimulus that has helped the economy surge to its strongest levels in 20 years. *Reuters*

European firms want EU to avoid trade war with US

BRUSSELS - An influential European business lobby urged Brussels on Friday to consider ways to avoid a looming transatlantic trade war, but US lawmakers saw little chance of meeting an EU deadline to avoid sanctions.

The statement from lobby Unice raises pressure on Brussels to avoid a fight that could hit the European economy as it slowly recovers from a downturn.

The Commission wants the United States to repeal a system of tax breaks for exporters, known as the Foreign Sales Corp. (FSC), by next month or face $200 million of sanctions, rising by one percent a month.

The Commission wants the FSC scheme repealed without any kind of transition period to a new system.

Unice said it was reluctantly ready to agree to some kind of phase-in period, provided it was as short as possible.

The FSC system benefited major companies including Microsoft and Caterpillar. Although both the Senate and the House of Representatives are considering bills to replace FSC, lawmakers saw little chance of meeting the March 1 deadline.

"Everybody knows we have a deadline," said Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, a Tennessee Republican. "I would like very much to be able to do it by March 1. I can't commit to it."

EU diplomats said the sanctions would come into force unless the United States came up with something concrete to dissuade the bloc from going ahead.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) gave the EU the right to $4 billion in compensation for the tax breaks, but Lamy decided to introduce the EU's sanctions in a gradual way. *Reuters*

US-Thailand trade talks on

WASHINGTON—The United States will begin free trade talks with Thailand during the second quarter of this year, following through on a commitment that President George W. Bush made last year, US trade officials said on Friday.

Thailand is the 18th largest US trading partner and the 16th largest market for US farm goods. Two-way trade with the Southeast Asian economy totaled $19.7 billion in 2002.

US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick said in a statement that the proposed agreement "would be particularly beneficial for US agricultural producers" by eliminating Thailand's high imports duties and other barriers that block sales of US farm products.

But in a recent free trade pact with Australia, the Bush administration balked at eliminating the United States' own protective tariffs for US sugar and dairy producers.

This is because of the fear of angering a key segment of the farm vote ahead of the November presidential election.

US sugar farmers and textile producers are already upset about a new US trade agreement with five Central American nations because of the prospects of increased foreign competition.

Zoellick gave Congress 90-day notice of the administration's intention to begin trade talks in a letter this week. That has been expected since last October, when Bush committed to the negotiations at the annual summit meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

A free trade agreement with Thailand would bring the Bush administration a step closer to its long-term goal of a regional free trade pact with Southeast Asian nations.

The United States already has a free trade pact with Singapore and is exploring ways to boost trade and investment ties with Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei and soon Malaysia. *Reuters*

Microsoft becoming a Disney suitor?

SEATTLE—One of the biggest winners in Comcast Corp.'s surprise $47.6-billion bid to buy Walt Disney Co., DIS.N, analysts said on Friday, may be the silent partner looming in the wings, Microsoft Corp.

Since Microsoft already owns 7.4 percent of Comcast, it would end up controlling about 4 percent of the world's largest media company if Comcast's bid succeeds.

That stake could give Microsoft leverage over the course of the deal and afterward as it looks to push its software beyond the maturing market for personal computers and into the still-developing boom in digital entertainment, analysts said.

Microsoft has long sought to forge links in the telecommunications and entertainment industries in order to sell its software, leading some observers to question whether the world's largest software maker could emerge as a rival bidder for Disney.

With nearly $53 billion in cash, analysts said Microsoft could easily pay for a large media franchise, such as Disney, with cash or stock.

"The missing link in all of Microsoft's plans is content," said Rob Helm, research director at Directions on Microsoft, a Kirkland, Washington-based independent researcher.

With the next version of Microsoft's market-dominant Windows operating software not expected for another two years or so, Helm said that "Microsoft is counting on digital audio and video to keep PC sales intact."

A spokesperson for the world's largest software maker declined to comment on any acquisition rumors.

But analysts said that even a minority ownership in a media giant rivaling Time Warner Inc. could be enough to create stronger links between Microsoft's software, Comcast's distribution and Disney's prized entertainment assets.

Just this week Disney agreed to license digital media technology from Microsoft for distributing movies over the Internet that would prevent illegal distribution and copying of digital movies.

Much of this week's merger hype echoed events seen five years ago, when AOL was constructing its merger with Time Warner Inc. and Microsoft invested billions in cable providers. *Reuters*

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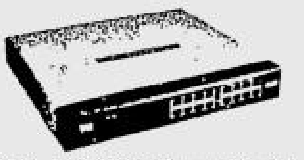

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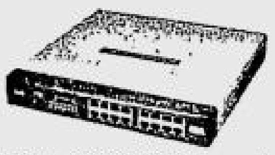

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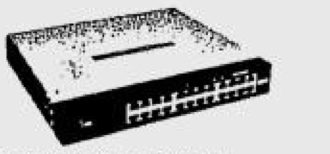

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Editor Aries Espinosa

Choosing the right paint for the job

USUALLY, the first consideration in choosing paints is the color. Cool colors, such as blue and green, tend to make walls appear to recede, whereas warmer hues, such as reds and browns, make walls appear to come closer together. Bright and sunny colors brighten a room, while dark shades provide for a more dramatic look and feel.

Decided on a color? Don't just run yet to the nearest hardware store, cautions BayanTrade director for strategic sourcing services Romil Acosta. "Aside from deciding on a suitable shade, buyers need to consider two other important factors before making a purchase: the type and quality of the paint and sourcing it from reliable vendors. A successful job is dependent upon using just the right paint.

"All coatings are specifically formulated for particular types of surfaces. Apply the incorrect kind of paint and it will quickly peel, crack or fade. No amount of surface preparation or careful application can save a job that's finished with the wrong type of paint," Acosta said.

But picking the appropriate paint isn't always easy, even for experienced painters. Some basic facts to know include the four components of paint: Pigment, for one, is what provides both the color and hiding property of paint. Hiding power is the ability of the paint to hide or obscure a surface after it has been uniformly applied. The second component of paint is the binder that cements the pigment particles together, providing toughness, adhesion and good color retention. Liquid, the third component, provides the paint's desired consistency whether it should be thicker or thinner, depending on the surface to be painted. Lastly, paint is also made up of additives or low-level ingredients that provide other paint properties such as mildew resistance, superior flow and leveling.

"As paints are used on different applications, the kind and quality of the ingredients dictate the general quality of the coating. Some of the more important paint properties affected would be color, hiding, level of gloss, spattering tendency and foaming tendency. Paints made with top ingredients are then more resistant to stains, mildew, yellow spots and blisters," said Acosta.

High quality paints are naturally more costly. Acosta argues, however, that more and more consumers are convinced of their value. "Good hiding and flow characteristics allow the paint to adhere easily to the surface with less brushing and retouching, so the job is finished in less time and with less paint. Fewer coats are needed to create a uniform appearance. Top quality paints also require less maintenance as cheaper paints may need to be re-applied sooner. In the long run, investing in quality paints may lead to bigger savings," he added.

The next factor to consider is finding a reliable supplier of high-quality paints. BayanTrade, which has a network of over 100 paint suppliers to choose from-ranging from brand manufacturers, accredited distributors and paint supplies companies-helps individual consumers and corporate purchasing officers alike identify and source paint supplies from reliable suppliers. BayanTrade is able to source all the different kinds of paints available in the market today, including industrial, marine and decorative paints. "Buyers are ensured that they are purchasing only from suppliers of original products and at true market prices. This provides consumers the best value for their money. And since BayanTrade facilitates transactions online, purchases can be made quickly and efficiently," Acosta said.

BayanTrade, a leading sourcing and procurement services provider, assists corporations in employing the best strategies and practices, using the most progressive tools and technologies, and provides expert support in sourcing commodities or buying categories.

TOYOTA 3-TIME SALAMBAO AWARDEE

The Parañaque Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PqCCI) awarded to Toyota Motor Philippines the prestigious Salambao Awards for Business Excellence for the third consecutive time. Toyota executive vice president Dr. David Go (2nd from left) accepted the award. Also shown are (from left) Rep. Ed Zialcita from the lone district of Parañaque, Julie Oconner-Lim, chair of the board of judges, and engineer Augusto Soliman, PqCCI executive vice president and Salambao Awards chair. The Salambao Awards for Business Excellence is open to all establishments with operations either as office or manufacturing site in Parañaque. Factors considered for the selection process were leadership, labor relations and employment, customer focus, and tax contribution.

US execs to share expertise in corporate systems

FOREIGN experts from all over the world are coming to Manila to help local and international organizations and corporations beef up their systems in various fields of operations.

This was revealed by the Philippine Convention and Visitors Corp (PCVC), citing new trends and developments in association management now taking place in many parts of the globe.

PCVC deputy executive director Rosvi Gaetos said the experts "are all participants in the 8th World Congress of Association Executives that will be held at the Philippine International Convention Center on Feb. 23 and 24."

The congress will serve as venue for local organizations to learn how to become world-class and strengthen their roles in society, wield socioeconomic and political influence, widen their international network of alliances, expand membership through innovative programs, institute best practices, adopt successful strategies, determine and acquire appropriate and practical technologies, raise funds and capital, undertake capacity building, and make sound policies and friction-free decisions, among others.

All these trade secrets will be shared with congress participants by chair Barbara Belmont, president John Graham IV and manager John Donaldson of the American Society of Association Executives, chief executive officer Francis Kong of Funworks Inc, executive director Peter Hermann of the Association for Information Management Professionals International, executive director John Sullivan of the Center for International Private Enterprise, president and CEO Andrea Sigler of the Connected International Meetings Professionals Association, director for strategic partnerships Michael Yates of the Pacific Asia Travel Association, and former Tourism Secretary and now vice president for Asia Pacific Mina Gabor of the World Association of Small and Medium Enterprises.

Belmont is also the executive director of the American School Food Service Association and the Child Nutrition Foundation. She is also the recipient of the Association Trends 2003 Executive of the Year Award and the Award of Excellence in Education from the Greater Washington Society of Association of Executives.

Kong was the general manager of Company B, a successful local clothing apparel company, and vice president for marketing and operations in the Philippines of Replay Jeans. He is a business consultant to many firms and has conducted many values seminars in top corporations and educational institutions throughout the country.

Graham was previously the CEO of the American Diabetes Association, whose annual revenues quadrupled from $50 million to $200 million during his tenure. Donaldson served as senior program manager for workforce development with the informational Technology Association of America where he managed a US Department of Education grant program on developing school-to-career connections between schools and the IT industry.

Sullivan was associate director of the bipartisan Democracy Program that created the National Endowment for Democracy, which supports CIPE. He has a PhD in international relations from the University of Pittsburgh, and is the author of a number of articles and publications on the transition to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, corporate governance, and market-oriented democratic development.

Inquiries or local registration can be made with the SAE-Phil secretariat through the PCVC conventions and incentive travel unit at 525-9318 loc. 236, 525-6110; fax 521-6165, e-mail cit@dotpcvc.gov.ph, or log on to www.assnsworldcongressmla.com.

Empowering patients through pharmacoeconomics

TRADITIONALLY, people suffering from any kind of illness have been a passive, powerless recipient of medical care provided by health professionals, usually physicians. Owing, perhaps, to preconceived notion that doctors are all-knowing when it comes to medicine and healthcare, patients seldom ask questions about their medicines and directly buy according to their doctors' prescriptions.

Perhaps, due to different factors brought about by time, patients now have become more involved in their own health. One of the main factors that brought about that change is the economic crisis. As the cost of medicines increase, patients have also become more practical. Even those who can afford expensive medicines are asking their physician for more affordable and effective brands as treatment options. This is the principle of pharmacoeconomics.

The idea of pharmacoeconomics is to present the patients alternatives to the more expensive drugs, with the goal of making sure that the medicine is taken by the patient strictly according to his medical decision and prescription. In a country where majority of the population is in poor financial state, the meager income of an average wage income earner will not have much room for costly medicines that have to be taken on a long-term basis. Through pharmacoeconomics, patients with chronic disease will have the capability of maintaining their treatment regimen without compromising the other needs of their families.

Lest people are misled, the affordability of the drug does not mean that it is of inferior quality. In fact, for a medicine to be considered pharmacoeconomic, it should provide the same quality as the originator drug. A generic product that has been shown by appropriate tests to be bioequivalent to the standard or innovator drug can be used as an alternate to the latter. Physicians who are familiar with the principles of drug bioequivalence, who believe that the bioequivalence test was conducted and reported properly by reputable investigators and who have confidence in the capability of the drug regulatory agency of the country to monitor and assure the quality of the drugs sold in their country will perceive products demonstrated to be bioequivalent as alternatives to the standard or innovator products.

Another goal of pharmacoeconomics is to assure that patients suffering from chronic disease such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and other ailments that require life-long medication can comply with their treatment. With an affordable line of medicines, they can be assured a greater protection from their diseases due to the regularity of intake of their medicines. More importantly, other costly eventualities or complications can be avoided through treatment compliance.

The introduction of pharmacoeconomics is seen to benefit chronic patients around the world. The burden of chronic diseases is now of epidemic proportions worldwide. In 2001, chronic diseases contributed approximately 59 percent of the 56.5 million total reported deaths in the world and 46 percent of the global burden of disease. In the Philippines, six out of the top ten causes of morbidity are due to chronic diseases.

Aside from knowing the alternative medicine for their diseases, patients could also help their treatment process by educating themselves about their illnesses. Practical experience is showing that today's patients with chronic diseases need not be mere recipients of care. For example, knowing how to recognize and act upon symptoms, dealing with acute attacks or exacerbations of the disease, making the most effective use of medicines and treatments, assessing social and other services, dealing with fatigue, managing work and developing strategies to deal with the psychological consequences of the illness could help them improve their conditions.

The knowledge and experience of patients has been an untapped resource in the field of medicine. Like their doctors, patients can become key decision-makers in the treatment process. The patients' active participation, physicians' expertise and affordable and effective medicines could greatly benefit the quality of patients' care and ultimately their quality of life.

ALI BMW promo winner bared Feb. 17

THE SOLE winner of Ayala Land Inc's BMW promo will finally be chosen from a number of entries on Feb. 17, during a sit-down dinner at the One Legazpi Park model units, behind the Filipinas Heritage Library in Makati Avenue. One lucky homeowner will be claiming a luxurious BMW 316i Sedan, the ultimate power vehicle for the demanding urban dweller. The promo period began mid-July 2003 until Jan. 31, with eligible purchasers of One Legazpi Park condominium units entitled to join the raffle. The draw will be held in the presence of a representative of the DTI. One Legazpi Park is real estate developer Ayala Land's condominium project strategically placed in the country's energetic business and shopping centers-at the corner of Legaspi and Rada Streets in Makati. One Legazpi Park residents enjoy the benefits of convenient and comfortable living. All units have likewise been dubbed the Legazpi Premiere, which combines beauty and functionality by showcasing specially designed gourmet kitchens. For inquiries, call 848-5000, or log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph.

MOTOROLA'S MOA WITH CELLSTAR, SEATTLE'S BEST

Motorola, a global leader in wireless, automotive and broadband communications, recently inked an agreement with CellStar Philippines, distributor of Motorola phones in the Philippines, and Seattle's Best for the new promo where Motorola is giving away cellular phones to lucky patrons for free. Every two orders of Seattle's Best Fruit Frosts entitle a customer a chance to win a Motorola C350. Shown, from left, is Michelle David, marketing manager of Seattle's Best, Arlene Amarante, country manager for personal communications sector of Motorola, and Alberto Abaquin Jr, marketing manager of CellStar. Seattle's Best is frequented by young and mobile urban professionals, the same market targeted by Motorola.

MASTERCARD'S PROMO WINNERS

MasterCard International congratulates the first monthly draw winners of Security Bank's Win a Million, Spend a Million promotion for its MasterCard credit cardholders. Dr. Vicki Belo, Roberto S. Gaw, Napoleon D. Marigomen, Carisse P. Escueta, and Juan VP Calaguian won P20,000 worth of shopping credits each. They will also be included in the grand prize draw on Feb. 16 to win P1 million worth of shopping credits. To qualify for the draw, customers simply signed up for a MasterCard credit card with Security Bank, or charged a minimum P500 to their existing Security Bank MasterCard credit card. Shown, from left, are Belen Lim, president, SB Cards Corp, dermatologist Vicki Belo, and Bernie Tocmo, Security Bank region head of NCR1.

PLANTERSBANK SPEAKS TO ACSIC PARTICIPANTS

Planters Development Bank (Plantersbank), the country's largest private development bank, represented by its president and chief operating officer Maria Flordelis F. Aguenza, shared her optimism for the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in a speech during the 16th Conference of the Asian Credit Supplementation Institution Confederation (Acsic) in Makati. Shown is Small Business Corp (SBCorp) chair and CEO Zorayda Amelia C. Alonzo and SBCorp president Benel Lagua congratulating Aguenza (center) following the speech. Plantersbank, which has built its reputation as the 'bank of SMEs' in the Philippines, includes among its shareholders the World Bank's International Finance Corp, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Netherlands Development Finance Company (FMO).

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MKT NR AYALA
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CONDO/TWNHSE

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RUSH Cheap Office Condo MADRIGAL BUSINESS PARK 46sqm T-8508789•5364575

MAKATI

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60sq. OFC Nr AYALA 7051684/93

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MANILA

NR LA SALLE TAFT
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Nr UST 250sq.m 634-1212

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

HOUSE & LOT

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COMML/RESDL

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- Carcar National Highway Vacant 1500 sqm Nr. SMC Sales Office

CEBU CITY
- Bacalzo Ave (South Expressway) Rear C. Padilla 10101 sqm Frontage 39M/Rear 91M
- Capitol Site Osmeña Blvd. 521 sqm.
- MJ Cuenco Ave. Two (2) sites 9480/10611 sqm w/ improvement Front 41/133 M
- Port Area Bounded Maxilom Arellano/ Quezon Blvd. w/ structure Front 31M/143M/ 144M
- Cebu Business Park Vacant 1341 sqm.
- Cebu Reclamation Two (2) corners 1039 846 sqm
- Off Gen Maxilom Ave Bounded Ramos/Jakoselem Sts. 17442 sqm Front 14M 85M
- Gen Maxilom Ave w/ structure 1489 sqm Front 22M Nr. USC-Boys High
- Sambag Off Bacalzo Ave. J. Alcantara (P. Del Rosario Ext) corner lot 3233 sqm.
- Lahug Molave St. 4826 sqm w/ office res.
- BusayTranscentral Hi-way Three (3) sites 4379/15808/ 20000 sqm
- Bulacao Pardo Cebu South Road Two (2) Lots 9774 sqm w/ office-factory bldg

MANDAUE CITY
- Reclamation Area Two (2) Vacant Lots Seafrontage 20 Has. Ouano Ave 35000 sqm.
- Tipolo National Hi-way 7186 sqm Front 103 M

MACTAN
- Lapu-lapu City Agus Beach Front 50000 sqm Front 130 M

DUMAGUETE CITY
- Rizal Boulevard cor. 913 sqm. Front 21Mx40M

BACOLOD CITY
- Vista Alegre Had Gloria 10 Has. Front 382 M

ILOILO CITY
- Guimaras Jordan Capitol View Subd San Miguel 31 Hectares

BUKIDNON
- Malaybalay Magsaysay St. Vacant 5293 sqm Front 50 M

BUTUAN CITY
- Baan Off National Hi-way Vacant 6 Has
- Bancasi Pinamaculan Rd Chicken Farm 4 Has Nr. Airport

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QUEZON CITY

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LOT

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Antipolo,Circumferential Rd com'l 216m² 0917-8102903

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1.5% CARLOAN 788-0357

1.5% Easy Carloan 7815352/55

1.5% Fast Car Loan 6560140

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3732081-82

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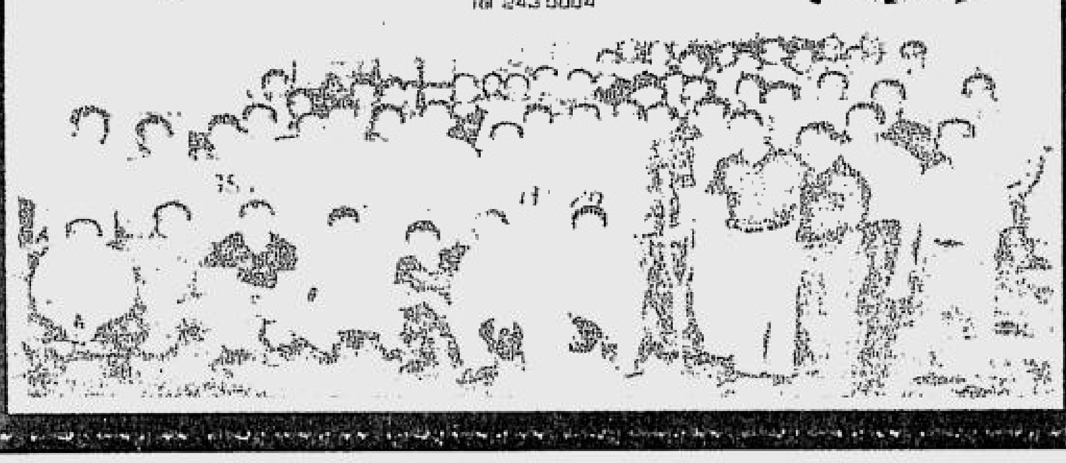

BCDA

BASES CONVERSION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS

ASSET DISPOSITION PROGRAM – PHASE 2

The Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) is inviting interested proponents to participate in Phase 2 of BCDA's Asset Disposition Program (ADP Phase 2). ADP Phase 2 involves the development and privatization of the following properties:

1. Approximately 7,659-square meter LogCom, Firing Range located along C-5 Road, Taguig, Metro Manila; and
2. Approximately 5,025-square meter Nichols Loop (Lot 10) located along South Superhighway, Villamor Air Base (VAB), Pasay City.

Interested proponents may submit their Letters of Interest to BCDA and can purchase the Terms of Reference (TOR) for ADP Phase 2 that outlines, among others, the requirements that will enable proponents to participate in the privatization.

The TOR for ADP Phase 2 will be ready for distribution to interested proponents starting on 13 February 2004 at the BCDA offices. A non-refundable cost of the TOR is Php10,000.00, for each TOR, payable to the BCDA in Cash or Manager's Check.

A conference among interested proponents is tentatively set on 20 February 2004. The objective of the conference is to discuss the property that forms part of ADP Phase 2, the TOR and other clarifications from interested proponents. Interested proponents will be informed of the final schedule and venue of the conference through contact numbers submitted to the BCDA.

Interested proponents can direct their inquiries to:

THE CHAIRMAN
ADP PHASE 2 COMMITTEE (ADPCom-2)
BCDA Corporate Centre
Gozar cor. Lucas Street, Villamor Air Base
Pasay City

or they can contact Ms. Aileen R. Zosa or Ms. Bambie L. Andal at telephone numbers 510-0420 or 510-0411.

RUFO COLAYCO
President and Chief Executive Officer

(PDI – Feb. 11, 16 & 18, 2004)

National Power Corporation

GEOTHERMAL GENERATION

BAC-MAN GEOTHERMAL POWER PLANT COMPLEX

INVITATION TO BID

INTERESTED PARTIES/SUPPLIERS ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PUBLIC BIDDING TO BE CONDUCTED ON MARCH 10, 2004 FOR THE FOLLOWING:

1. **PR#3BAC-04-0091** - SUPPLY OF LABOR AND MATERIALS FOR THE REWINDING/ RECONDITIONING AND REHABILITATION OF HOTWELL PUMP MOTOR
   ESTIMATED COST: P1,785,000.00
2. **PR#3BAC-04-0020** /PB-04-0122 - AUTO-TITRATOR, Titroline Alpha Plus
   ESTIMATED COST: P907,500.00
3. **PR#3BAC-04-0103** /PB-04-0118 - BALL VALVE, 3/4" WOG T316 ASTM & 7 Others
   ESTIMATED COST: P967,500.00

PRE-BID CONFERENCE : MARCH 01, 2004/BMGPPC CONFERENCE ROOM / 2:00 P.M.
BIDDING DATE : MARCH 10, 2004 / BMGPPC CONFERENCE ROOM / 2:00 P.M.

COPIES OF BID DOCUMENTS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM PROCUREMENT SERVICES ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION, GROUND FLOOR, BAC-MAN GEOTHERMAL POWER PLANT COMPLEX AND MUST BE SUBMITTED ON OR BEFORE MARCH 10, 2004, 2:00 P.M.

ALL BIDS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED WITH BIDDER'S BOND IN THE FOLLOWING FORMS:

- CASH, MANAGER'S OR CASHIER'S CHECK -- ONE (1)% OF THE ESTIMATED PRICE.
- 2.5% OF THE ESTIMATED PRICE ISSUED BY THE GSIS OR ANY REPUTABLE SURETY.
- 1 1/2% BANK GUARANTEE CONFIRMED/AUTHENTICATED BY A REPUTABLE BANK

ALL INTERESTED BIDDERS MUST SUBMIT PRE-QUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE FEBRUARY 23, 2004.

(Sgd.) **ROLANDO E. CAWALING**
BAC CHAIRMAN

(PDI - Feb. 16, 19, 25 & 27, 2004)

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INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND SUBMIT PROJECT PROPOSAL

The Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU) hereby invites interested contractors/project proponents (local or foreign firms) to pre-qualify and submit comparative/competitive project proposals to the Unsolicited Proposal received from a reliable firm for the Build and Transfer (BT) **Construction of the DMMMSU Integrated Educational Business Administrative Center (DEBAC) Project** located at San Fernando City, La Union on a 15-Year Payment Plan at 12% annual interest and pursuant to R.A. 6957 as amended by R.A. 7718 and its implementing rules and regulations (IRR).

Interested contractors/project proponents are required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) addressed to the Chairman, University Bids and Awards Committee (UBAC) at DMMMSU, 3rd Floor JICA Building, Sapilang, Bacnotan, La Union on or before **March 01, 2004 until 12 noon** ("Submission Deadline"). Pre-qualification documents and forms are available for issuance to interested potential contractors/ project proponents starting February 09, 2004 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Hundred Thousand (P500,000.00) Pesos showing adequate capability to sustain the financing requirements of the construction of the project.

DMMMSU reserves the right to reject any or all applications for pre-qualification, to waive any defect or infirmity therein, to accept a project proposal and to award the contract to the most advantageous proposal.

(Sgd.) **DR. ELVI C. BUGAOAN**
Chairman, UBAC

(PDI–February 13, 16 & 23, 2004)

Republika ng Pilipinas
PAMBANSANG PANGASIWAAN NG PATUBIG
(National Irrigation Administration)
PUROK BLG. VII
TANGGAPAN NG ENHENYERONG PANLALAWIGAN NG PATUBIG
(Office of the Provincial Irrigation Officer)
Sibulan, Negros Oriental
Tel. Number (035) 225-1480 • (035) 419-8541 Fax No. (035) 225-2735

INVITATION FOR PREQUALIFICATION AND BIDDING

The **NATIONAL IRRIGATION ADMINISTRATION** invites interested accredited preparer/consultants to apply for prequalification to bid and submit sealed bids to conduct/undertake the hereunder activity:

I. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), prepare environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Engineering Geological and Geohazard Assessment Rek (EGGAR) and other corollary activities with the objective of securing Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) for the Dauin Small Reservoir Irrigation Project (SRIP) that is located at Barangay Magsaysay, Dauin, Negros Oriental.

Prequalification forms may be secured from NIA, Sibulan, Negros Oriental upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **FIVE HUNDRED PESOS (P 500.00)** starting **February 16, 2004** to **March 01, 2004**

Deadline for submission of the complete prequalification documents is on **March 08, 2004**.

Preparer/Consultants and Contractor will be notified on the results of the prequalification

Site inspection and pre-bidding for EIA/EIS/EGGAR preparation will be on **March 30, 2004** in the morning after which bid documents will be issued to prequalified bidders.

Shortlisted bidders concurred by Asian Development Bank (ADB) will be invited for submission of their **Technical and Financial Proposals** in two (2) separate sealed envelopes. Deadline for submission is on **April 30, 2004** at **10:30 a.m.** to the BAC, NIA, Sibulan, Negros Oriental

Qualified firms on their technical proposals will be notified and invited for the evaluation of their financial proposal.

Evaluation will be based on ABD's Quality and Cost Base Selection System

The NIA reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, or to accept such bids or to award any of the above items to any bidders whose bids is/are considered the most advantageous to NIA and/or government.

THE BIDDING COMMITTEE
(Sgd.) **DEXTER G. PATROCINIO**
Provincial Irrigation Officer

(PDI--Feb 16, 19, 23 & 26, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Cebu
Bids and Awards Committee
Cebu Capitol, Cebu City

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

The Provincial Government of Cebu through its BIDS and AWARDS COMMITTEE (BAC) invites qualified Contractors with "AAA" License and registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) as Large "B" for Roads, to apply for eligibility and to submit sealed bids for the Asphalting of Bunlan – Cabutongan Road, Santander, Cebu, charged against the Continuing Appropriation for 20% Development Fund under PR# 04-468 dated 02-06-04 and Alobs # 100-04-02-344 dated 02-06-04 in the amount of Three Million Eight Hundred Sixty Six Thousand One Hundred Thirty Three Pesos and 62/100 (P3,866,133.62) and charged against Continuing Appropriation General Fund Proper under PR # 04-467 dated 02-06-04 and Alobs # 100-04-02-346 dated 02-06-04 in the amount of Nine Hundred Seventy Two Thousand Two Hundred Eighty Four Pesos and 47/100 (P972,284.47) with a total Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of P4,838,418.09.

Interested parties are requested to submit a Letter of Intent and updated documents to the Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), through the BAC Secretariat prior to the issuance of the Plans and Bid Documents.

Major Items of Work Involved

Item 310 - Bit. Concrete Surface Coarse (Hot Laid, 50 mm thk)

Minimum Equipment Requirements:

Equipment Type	Quantity	
Asphalt Batching Plant, (Cap. 80 Tons/Hr.)	1 Unit	Owned
Asphalt Distributor (Truck Mounted)	1 Unit	Owned
Asphalt Paver	1 Unit	Owned
Hydraulic Excavator	1 Unit	Owned
Motor Grader	1 Unit	Owned
Tandem Road Roller (10 Tons)	1 Unit	Owned
Vibratory Compactor (15 Tons)	1 Unit	Owned
Pneumatic Road Roller (12 Tons)	1 Unit	Owned
Water Truck (Cap. 6,000 gals.)	1 Unit	Owned
Dump Trucks, (10 T - 20 T)	2 Units	Owned
Payloader, 2.5 cu.m.	1 Unit	Owned

Schedule for the Procurement Activities:

	Dates	Time	Place
Submittal of Letter of Intent & Issuance of Eligibility Forms	Feb. 10-16, 2004	8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Deadline for submission of Eligibility Documents	Feb. 18, 2004	8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Issuance of Notice to Eligible Bidders	Feb. 23, 2004	8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Issuance of Plans and Bid documents	Feb. 24, 2004	8:00-5:00 P.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Pre-bidding Conference	Feb. 26, 2004	10:00 A.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat
Public Bidding	March 09, 2004	10:00 A.M.	PGSO, BAC Secretariat

Only Bids within the Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid will be accepted.

Plans and Bid Documents can be obtained from the BAC Secretariat, PGSO, DEP-ED Bldg., Cebu Capitol, Cebu City upon payment of non-refundable amount of P3,000.00

All particulars relative to the eligibility process, bidding, evaluation of bids, post qualification and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

The Bids and Awards Committee of the Province of Cebu reserves the right to reject any or all bids to waive any defects or formality therein and to accept bids considered complying and most advantageous to the Government.

For more information please contact the BAC Secretariat at Tel. No. 253-9614 / 253-3981. This requirement is also posted at the PGSO Bulletin Board, DEP-ED Bldg., Capitol, Cebu City.

(Sgd.) **EDUARDO T. HABIN**
Chairman

(PDI – February 10 & 16, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila

CORPORATION FINANCE DEPARTMENT

IN THE MATTER OF:
FIG FINANCING COMPANY, INC.
(Formerly, FIG Lending Investor Corp.)

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORITY TO OPERATE AS A FINANCING COMPANY

NOTICE AND ORDER

Notice is hereby given that the above-named corporation has filed an application for a Certificate of Authority to engage in financing business in accordance with Sections 2, 4, and 5 of the Rules and Regulations to Implement the Provisions of Republic Act No. 8556 (The Financing Company Act of 1998). Its principal office shall be at 162 Legaspi St., Legaspi Village, Makati City.

Structure of the Applicant:

Authorized Capital Stock	P10,000,000.00
Subscribed Capital Stock	10,000,000.00
Paid-up Capital Stock	10,000,000.00

According to the papers/documents presented, the following persons are the directors/officers of the corporation:

Name	Position
D. Arnold A. Cabangon	President
D. Alfred A. Cabangon	Director
J. Antonio A. Cabangon	Director
Antonio L. Cabangon Chua	Director
Armando C. Trinidad	Director
Atty. Francisco Jim Asuncion	Corp. Secretary

This Notice and Order shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks and shall be simultaneously posted in a public and conspicuous place in the City/Municipality where the office of the company is proposed to be located and in the office of the Commission.

Any interested party may oppose the application in writing, personally or through counsel within two (2) weeks after the last publication of the Notice. If the Commission finds that the requirements of R.A. 8556, the implementing Rules and Regulations and other pertinent laws have been complied with and no valid reason exists for the disapproval of the subject application, the Commission shall take appropriate action on said application.

SO ORDERED.
February 9, 2004

(Sgd.) **JUSTINA F. CALLANGAN**
Director

(PDI--Feb. 16, 2004)

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We remember Lovingly and Dearly,
our Beloved

ESTELA TABTAB GUZMAN

on her 4th Death Anniversary
on February 16, 2004

Masses will be offered today,
Monday, February 16, 2004
at the following churches:

Christ the King, Green Meadows	6:00 PM
St. Ignatius Cathedral, Camp Aguinaldo	12:15 PM
Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills	6:15 AM
Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes	6:00 PM

We, her family, request her friends and pious readers to join us in prayer for the eternal repose of her soul.

FELISA MAGSALIN CRISTI

Peacefully joined her Creator
on February 14, 2004 at the age of 79.

Her beloved husband **Ciling**; children **Boy & Cynthia, Girlie & Jun Bernabe, Leny & Ed Alabastro, Lody, Jojo & Hannah, Mon & Socci**; grandchildren and great-grandchildren; sister **Mory M. Fernando**; in-laws **Nilda, Yaning & Sioning, Lily**, and **Norma**; other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Willmann Chapel, Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

Cremation will follow after the 8:00 a.m. Mass on Wednesday, February 18, 2004 at Holy Trinity Crematorium.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring...

INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:

❶ Copy of Death Certificate

❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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CARD OF THANKS

The family and relatives of the late

CLARITA (CLARA) ESTRELLA SANTIAGO

who peacefully joined her Creator
on February 8, 2004

wish to express their gratitude and appreciation to all those who in one way or another condoled with them in their hour of bereavement.

In Loving Memory

On the SECOND DEATH ANNIVERSARY of

B/General Elias G. Lavadia (Ret.)

who peacefully joined his Creator on February 16, 2002.

His loving wife **Amada Cruz Lavadia**; children **Sylvia** and **Jimmy Javier, Tocy** and **Wayne Friend, Ramon** and loved ones request relatives and friends to join them in praying for the repose of his soul.

Holy Masses will be offered at:

St. Andrews Apostle	6:30 p.m.
Santuario de San Antonio	12:00 n.n.
National Shrine of the Sacred Heart	7:00 a.m.
St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori	6:15 a.m.

Dearly beloved Wife & Mother

THELMA DARIO MAGSAKAY

Passed away in the Grace of Our Lord on Feb. 14, 2004 at the age of 77 at St. Luke's Medical Center.

She shall be missed by her bereaved husband, **PAF Col. (Ret.) Feliciano E. Magsakay Jr.** and children **Roberto** (†), **Feliciano III, Maria Angeles, Josephine Marie, Carolyn Marie** (†), **Maria Lourdes, Jose Marie Victor** and in laws **Florinda, Doris, Arnaldo, James**; grandchildren **Abbie, Francine, Francis, Janina, Joselle, Jasper, Jared, Janelle, Jamie, Joshua.**

Her remains lie in state at Luna Chapel, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat (inside Manila Memorial Park), Sucat, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, February 18, 2004 at 3:00 p.m. at Manila Memorial Park.

IN MEMORIAM AETERNA

Beloved Husband, Dearest Tatay and Lolo

Engr. Alfredo M. Bretaña, Sr.

February 3, 1925 – February 21, 2003

The Holy Mass will be offered at the following churches this 21st day of February 2004 in commemoration of his 1st Death Anniversary

***Rancho Estate 3 Chapel**, Marikina 10:00 AM*
***Sacred Heart Church**, Kingdom of Bahrain 5:30 PM Bahrain Time Feb. 20, 2004*
***St. Anthony of Padua Parish**, Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo 6:00 AM*
***Sta. Maria Church**, Iloilo City 6:00 AM*
***Parish of Our Lady of Candles**, Jaro Metropolitan Cathedral, Jaro Iloilo City 6:00 AM*

We sincerely thank our relatives and friends who continue to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

"We will always love you Tatay"

***Marina (Nanay), Nene & Luchie, Nono, Neneng, Nonong & Ann, Inday & Eric, Nenette** and **Birdie** and Grandchildren*

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

CARMEN ABAD Vda. de CÁRDENAS

Peacefully joined her Creator,
her loving husband ***Manuel Perez Cárdenas****,*
and her son ***Manuel Jr. (Ling)***
on February 15, 2004 at the age of 86.

Her children **MIKE & KAREN**, and **PENNY**; her grandchildren **SANDY & MARVIN KEENE, TIM**, and relatives request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Christ the King Parish, Green Meadows Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, February 18, 2004 at the La Loma Cemetery.

> **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."**
>
> — John 3:16

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Nivel Hills, Lahug, Cebu City;
Tels. 231-0721; 231-3192
COSMOPOLITAN FUNERAL HOMES, INC.
Camus Ext. cor. J. Abad Santos, Davao City;
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DAYAO FUNERAL HOME
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413-9400; 715-5594
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Digital piracy and options for the consumer

By Leo Magno

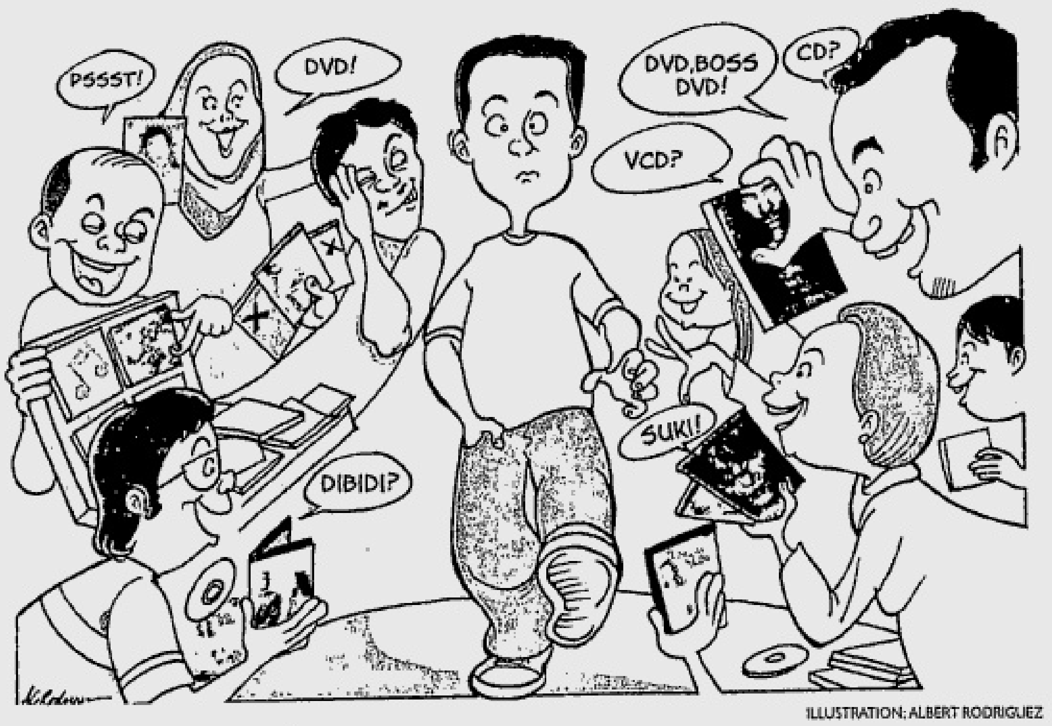

PSSST!
DVD!
DVD, BOSS DVD!
CD?
VCD?
SUKI!
DIBIDI?

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

THIS week, allow me to digress a bit from our usual gaming review to discuss the country's gallant efforts to stamp out piracy in the Philippines—not just video game piracy but all forms of "unauthorized" duplication of digital content, be it audio or video or software.

I realize such a discussion is bait for never-ending arguments and even flame mail, especially now that President Macapagal-Arroyo has signed into law the Optical Media Bill, which seeks to penalize film, music and software piracy. The new law creates the Optical Media Board which will succeed the aging Videogram Regulatory Board. The Optical Media Law even carries with it a big stick—a maximum penalty of P3 million and imprisonment of up to nine years.

Nothing wrong with enacting such a measure, in fact I believe it is good for the digital media industry and would keep investors happy. There are, however, some salient points about piracy which some people might tend to overlook.

Buyer in the middle

Sadly, it is no longer just a war between pirates and media moguls. Nor is it a question of whether or not you support piracy by purchasing digital content which are reproduced without the authorization of the intellectual property right holder or the publisher. With the Optical Media Law, the battle seeks to target—in a clandestine way—private and individual users who may or may not condone piracy.

You see, the law aims to combat piracy at its very root by regulating the media used to distribute digital content illegally. With the Optical Media Law, optical media such as writable CDs and DVDs will be regulated. What would happen if you had a CD or DVD writer? Granted, private users may not use such devices for commercial purposes, but the thought of regulating the medium on which you should be able to write down digital content is like having someone look over your shoulder while saving files on your hard drive.

But that is not the key point in this argument. What surfaces here is the entertainment industry's fear of technology and how digital content can be reproduced with impunity. It is this fear, more than the fear of losing what they claim to be millions of dollars or pesos in potential revenue, that fuels their perceived immediate need to enact a tougher law on digital media.

It is the fear of losing control. It is the fear of consumers, practicing their right to fair use, to utilize technology to organize and file their digital assets on their own.

In more concrete terms, we're going back to the old dilemma of the cassette tape. Back when vinyl ruled, blank cassette tapes all of a sudden allowed private users to record their favorite tunes from several different albums. The recording industry cried foul, but eventually the cassette became a compact medium on which they could place their records. In other words, the cassette tape also gave the recording industry benefits. And then came the CD and the writable CD which eventually became the standard.

Technology marched on like a juggernaut, and the old was replaced by the new.

Smell of fear

The same thing is now happening to optical media. The smell of fear is once again in the air, and technology is at the core of this fear. All of a sudden people can download audio and video from the Internet, or buy the same from peddlers of pirated copies, rip them and store them at will using optical device writers in their computers.

It is this fear—the fear of individual users being capable of reproducing digital content at will through the use of technology—that is evident in the Optical Media Law.

You don't have to look far to smell this fear. Look at Divisoria or the *tiangge* in Greenhills. For years, even decades, we have been seeing counterfeit Levi's jeans, Nike shoes, Polo shirts, Gucci bags, Tag Heuer watches and even fake Armani fragrances being sold left and right. But the government's effort to stamp out these fake or "pirated" products is not as vigorous as its effort to curb digital media duplication.

This is precisely because, unlike digital media, individual users cannot duplicate such goods on their own. You can't reproduce a Nike shoe on your own. You can't ape the fragrance of Acqua Di Gio using everyday kitchen chemicals. Nor can you sew your own jeans and stamp a neatly reproduced Levi's label on the back. If ever individuals have the talent and equipment to do so, it would take a considerable amount of resources.

Compare this to the few minutes it takes you to reproduce a copy of Sarah Geronimo's album from one CD to another, whether or not that CD of yours came from legitimate sources.

> What the local media industry needs to do now, in the face of technological change, is to come up with innovative sales and distribution methods instead of trying to stop a tsunami of technological waves

Sarah's story

Which brings us to a commentary on a story which appeared in our very own Entertainment section on Feb. 12. The headline states: "Sarah Geronimo loses P2.2M to record pirates."

The article states that, "while Sarah's album has already reached the triple platinum mark with 90,000 copies sold, her royalty of P10 per album sold, or five percent of whole sale price, is nowhere near P3 million that had been her projected earning."

The article continues to say that, "at the rate the album has sold in the legitimate records market, 'Pop Star' (Geronimo's album) should have sold already half a million copies. There are in fact more copies of the pirated album than the original."

What's wrong with this picture? There's nothing wrong about making projections on album sales, but the rest of the statement above is pure conjecture. The loss of sales being attributed to piracy does not mean an automatic income "stolen" from the artist or the recording company. This goes for any digital content, be it video, video game or software. For all you know, the people who bought the pirated goods—people who are not necessarily pirates themselves—may have decided not to buy the legitimate copy itself precisely because there was a cheaper alternative.

To put it succinctly, why would I buy a P400 album if the next store is selling it for P40? Worse, why would I buy a P10,000 piece of software if one is available for P100? Or a P3,000 video game if one is available for P80?

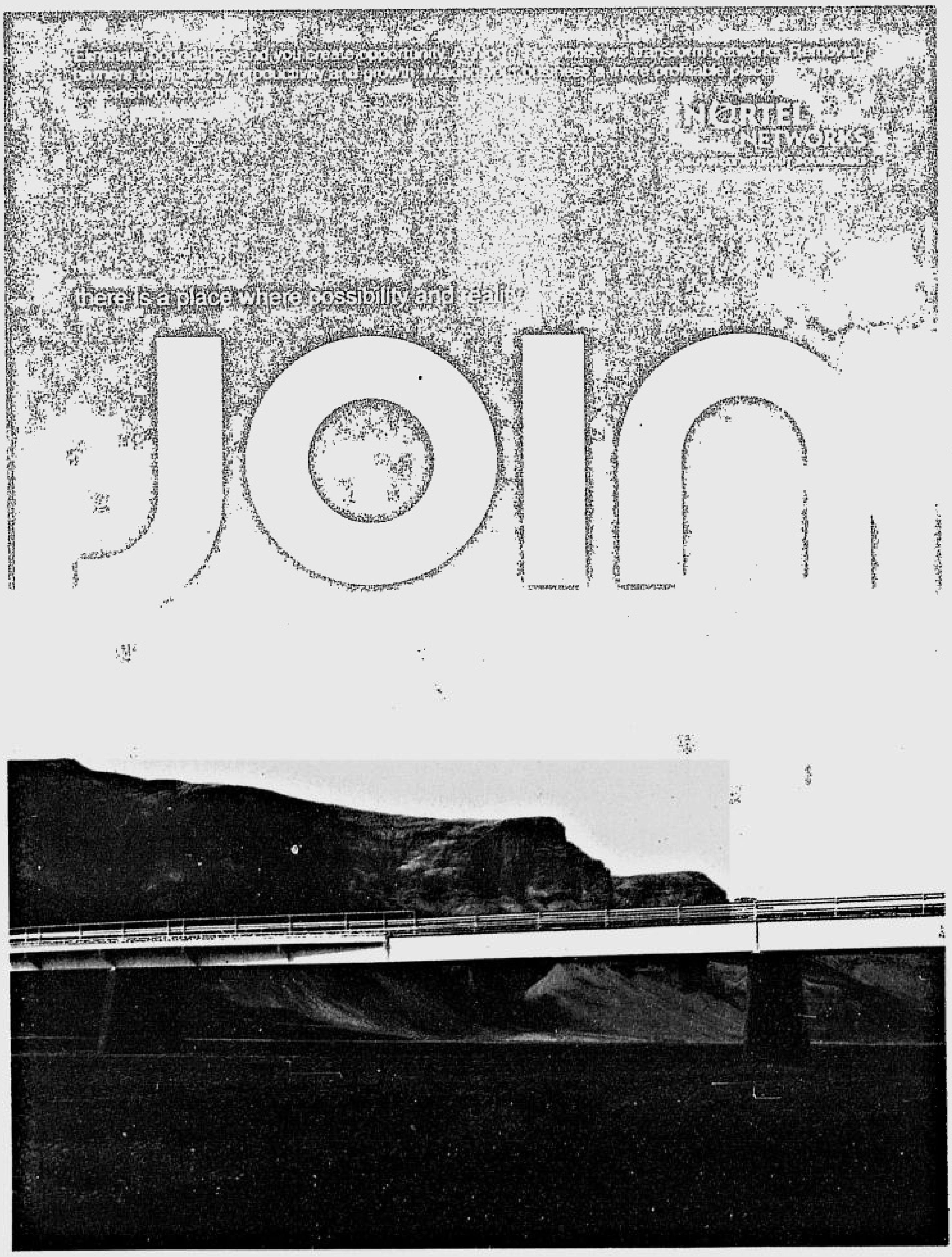
No doubt the recording industry is suffering. Artists used to need sales of hundreds of thousands of copies for a record to be a bestseller; now Geronimo's 90,000 copies are enough for triple platinum. But that is not the point.

What is wrong with the Geronimo article is that the young and talented Sarah is made to appear like she is being deprived of a profitable shot in the industry. Read the story further and you'd find out that it was basically about Ms Macapagal signing the Optical Media Bill into law, on Feb. 10 no less—the start of the campaign period.

In the same vein, I do not see any reason why I should cry for New Line Cinema when people buy pirated copies of "Lord of the Rings." The three films in the series only made about $2 billion so far, anyway.

That is also why I won't cry for Microsoft, or for Electronic Arts, or for Viva Records who is complaining about the potential loss of Geronimo's P2.2 million. Remember, Geronimo gets only 5 percent, while her recording company gets 95 percent. If you staunchly believe in the artist's talent and intellectual property

DIGITAL/ B15



UST upgrades library information system

TO CATCH up with the fast-changing technologies and give its patrons the best possible service, the UST Library has decided to change its system—from T-Series to Millennium.

The software is from Innovative Interfaces Inc., a provider of Web-based solutions of academic, public, law, medical, special and school district libraries in 35 countries worldwide.

The decision to us Millennium came after careful evaluation and comparison of all the library systems being considered. Functionally, technical support and data conversion were taken into consideration.

The UST Library started using Millennium last December 2003 but was formally launched Feb. 6. Go to http://ustlib.ust.edu.ph to find out more.

Malacañang appoints . . .

From page B16

Various representatives in Congress have proposed bills asking for the establishment of the ICT super agency since 1992.

The interim ICT Commission would essentially merge into one body the National Computer Center (an agency attached to the Department of Science and Technology), the Telecommunications Office and the telecommunications planning division under the Department of Transportation and Communications.

The National Telecommunications Commission and the Philippine Postal Corp. will also become agencies attached to the ICT Commission.

The current NCC chief and Philpost head will serve as two of the commissioners of the ICT Commission. The two other commissioners will be appointed by Malacañang.

The ICT Commission will run under the existing budget of each agencies that will be merged under the new body.

As former top honcho of IBM Philippines, Peña is quite a familiar personality in the Philippine high-tech industry, which is now growing stronger with the renewed interest in ICT.

President Macapagal appointed Peña as presidential adviser on ICT in 2001. Eventually he was named executive director of the Information Technology and E-commerce Council (ITECC), the country's highest policymaking body in ICT, following the merger of the National Information Technology Council and the E-commerce Promotion Council.

In reaction to his appointment, Peña who is known to be very diplomatic and soft-spoken, downplayed this recent development, saying that he still has to receive official word from Malacañang.

"Until I get that appointment, that's just hearsay," said Peña, when asked to react on news of his appointment.

Peña is an electrical engineer. However, he eventually became an ICT professional after serving as chief information officer, then later president and managing director of IBM Philippines. He then moved to San Miguel Brewery International, where he implemented one of the largest IT projects of the company.

Later, Peña set up his own consulting firm until Malacañang asked him to perform government duties.

As head of ITECC, Peña has become the government's champion for ICT. Later, he was appointed undersecretary of ICT of the Department of Transportation and Communications—a development that hinted that he was being groomed to head the CICT.

As head of CICT, Peña is expected to eventually push e-government initiatives, particularly legislation that would institutionalize such inititatives.

The ITECC is currently working on a draft e-government bill that CICT would likely lobby for in Congress. That is, if the CICT is not abolished by the next President should the Macapagal administration cease to continue after the May elections.

Life after call center business

By Alex Villafania
Contributor

THE OUTSOURCED software development business in the Philippines could overtake the call center business in terms of overall growth given the right government incentive and a second look from local investors.

Joey Gurango, CEO of software development firm Webworks OS, said the local application development industry should strive to surpass the call center industry because of long-term benefits and industry security.

While acknowledging that the call center industry has experienced huge growth in the past two years, Gurango said the software industry drives the production of more knowledge-based workers that are adept in research and development rather than in providing basic services.

Gurango said although call centers have become the most insatiable employers in the past, employees in software companies have more and better opportunities both locally and abroad. These workers, he said, are also capable of pushing for more local entrepreneurs to put up their own software development firms, either for local or international markets.

"Call centers are driven by cost, while software development is driven by knowledge capital. There's nothing wrong with working in a call center, but the entrepreneurial sense is more prevalent among workers in software firms," said Gurango, who used to run the business software development firm Great Plains, which was later on acquired by Microsoft.

Gurango also urged companies to focus on which specific market they want to target. One misconception he cited is that the software industry should cover both the local and foreign markets. He warned that there are very different dynamics between marketing for these two sectors.

Digital piracy and options . . .

From page B14

right, increase her share, for pity's sake, and stop making a poor example of her and hope the press would take the bait of ad misericordiam articles.

In a marketplace where buyers are constantly hunting for bargains, the lure of cheaper pirated goods is irresistible. And when you see pirated products of all kinds—from digital content to apparel to accessories—I see no way for government to stop bargain hunters from buying "fake" content while other fake products tempt their senses elsewhere.

This brings us back to the Optical Media Law and the fear of digital content providers. It is the fear of duplication at the hands of individual consumers which, in turn, is getting scary for us consumers.

Take for example the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and its ongoing lust for lawsuits. Napster is history, and now Kazaa is the target. However, over 500 Americans have already been sued by the RIAA thus far, and more lawsuits are waiting to be served. These are users, not producers.

But Napster and Kazaa are online. In the local, physical setting, Napster and Kazaa would be the country's audio, video and software pirates (most of them actually come from Malaysia and Hong Kong; the people in Raon, Quiapo and Greenhills, San Juan merely have them shipped to the country in bulk).

However, the Optical Media Law's regulation of digital media is tantamount to labeling consumers themselves as pirates, with no distinction between one which illegally produces digital content for commercial purposes and the other which merely compiles his or her playlist into CDs or DVDs under the fair use principle.

This is the pitfall into which the RIAA fell. By suing individuals who download songs from file-sharing networks, the American recording industry has blurred the line between the pusher and the user. Again the fear of technology here is evident, because the users themselves can directly download and reproduce their products. What they should do is embrace technology rather than stifle it in a vain attempt to revive the floundering industry.

Apple again

And so it was that a technology company sought a solution to the problem. Enter Apple Computer Inc. Apple sought a compromise between the idea of downloading individual songs (as opposed to buying an entire album on a CD) and still giving revenue to the content producer. By offering songs for download for 99 US cents each, Apple's iTunes was able to rake in more than 50 million downloaded songs in less than a year since its inception. The model was so successful that Dell Inc. and even the reformed Napster 2.0 are trying to duplicate the effort.

The idea had to come from a technology company, not from the media/entertainment industry from which the problem stemmed. Instead of bucking the effects of technology, Apple rode on it like a veteran cowboy on a stallion. Instead of bucking it, Apple sold songs for a less than a buck, and as a result 50 million bucks came galloping in. That's $50 million where once there was zero due to "illegal" downloads.

The Philippine media industry should do the same. Instead of labeling all and sundry as "pirates" and casting the blame of their poor sales on everyone, the local industry should try to go with the flow and earn where they could. As in the case of Apple, $50 million is better than zero. The consumers should be thought of as partners, not pirates.

Offer them songs on a pay-per-use basis. Offer them on a piece-meal basis instead of entire albums. Offer online and offline downloads. Come up with radical new pricing schemes. The software industry was flexible enough to restructure its pricing schemes and implement such affordable new payment options. The entertainment industry could do the same.

What the local media industry needs to do now, in the face of technological change, is to come up with innovative sales and distribution methods instead of trying to stop a tsunami of technological waves. I have several ideas on how to reinvent audio and video sales and distribution channels using technology, but I'll reserve that for another article.

Again, this all boils down to offering choices instead of regulation. Nobody wants their use of optical media to be watched. Nobody would buy something which can be bought at a tenth of the price from the other store. And nobody would cry because some billion-dollar company is losing millions of dollars for an illegal product being sold at every corner. As far as the consumer is concerned, he or she is just looking for a bargain.

But I have faith in the consumer's nature, and that faith says that if consumers are given more flexible options, they would not bite the bullet; they would stay on the right path.

Piracy is not the problem of consumers. The consumers' problem is the lack of options. Give them that and they would buy original.

Yes, even if it's a Sarah Geronimo CD.

Oracle sees 3 growth drivers . . .

From page B16

WILLIAMS

the Philippines, Australia, Korea, Malaysia, China, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Taiwan, Indonesia and Thailand.

"There were a lot of challenges faced by the local and international markets last year, but Oracle is pleased by the growth of the Asia Pacific region," said Williams in an interview with Infotech. "We see broad recovery in specific market segments in the US and this would also drive recovery in Apac. We expect the Apac region to grow the fastest for Oracle in the next 12 months."

Oracle is on its third fiscal quarter and will start the next fiscal year in July.

Williams said the growth in the semiconductor, telecommunications, supply chain and financial industries are indicators of recovery for the IT industry.

"The primary way Oracle would benefit from these factors is in three situations: the adoption of Linux, grid computing and mid-market packaged applications. These are technology drivers and agents of growth at the same time," Williams said.

The open source operating system known as Linux has seen a spike in adoption across industries in the past three years, and Oracle hopes to ride on this trend with its investments in Linux development and software offerings built around Linux.

On the other hand, Oracle has also been active in promoting grid computing, or the method of pooling computing resources together into one massive and cooperative network that handles computational loads in a network grid. This grid of computers then becomes similar to utilities like water and electricity, providing services when and where needed.

"Out of 400 beta customers of Oracle 10G worldwide, 18 are in the Apac region," said Williams. Oracle 10G is the company's grid computing platform.

Finally, Oracle sees mid-market applications as another technology and business driver for the next 12 months. Mid-market apps, or those especially packaged for small- and medium-sized companies, are becoming popular in Asia where such firms abound. For this, Oracle launched the E-Business Suite Special Edition for Asia Pacific, a pre-configured, pre-installed package of Oracle E-Business Suite applications designed specifically for Asian companies that have 50 to 1,000 employees.

"These are the three marketplace opportunities we see in the coming year," said Williams.

Williams added that Apac growth was not limited to traditional leaders China and India, and was in fact broader in scope. He cited Thailand and Australia as big contributors to this growth.

"So far, 14 percent of fiscal year 2003 revenues come from Apac, while 21 percent of all new product license revenues come from the region," he said. "About 65 percent of applications implementation are in the Asia Pacific region."

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12pm – 6pm	Technology Solutions Exhibit
1pm – 1:30pm	Mobile Computing Technology Keynote by Daren Ng
1:30pm – 2:30pm	Deploying Mobile Computing Solutions in the Enterprise by Deiter Brueckner
2:30pm – 3:30pm	Scaling Up to a Secure Network Infrastructure by Gilbert Virtucio
3:30pm – 4:30pm	Gearing Up to a VOIP-enabled Network by Kenneth Palacios
4:30pm – 5:00pm	Networking Technology Keynote by Stanimira Koleva

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Editor **Leo Magno**

Malacañang appoints ICT commission chair

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

PEÑA

MALACAÑANG has finally appointed Virgilio Peña as chair of the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT).

Prior to his appointment, Peña was undersecretary of information and communications technology of the Department of Transportation and Communications.

"He was just appointed CICT chair. I'm happy because I think there is no better choice," a government official said.

Peña's name has been floated around in the search for someone to head this new Cabinet position, which would lead government efforts in ICT.

Malacañang is expected to appoint two of the four commissioners under the new body anytime soon. Peña is scheduled to meet with President Macapagal-Arroyo today to receive his official appointment.

The CICT was created under Executive Order 269 signed by Ms Macapagal. It would act as an interim body to the proposed Department of Information and Communications Technology, which has not been realized for years despite the efforts of various industry organizations lobbying for Congress to create the ICT department.

The measure creating the ICT department has been shelved at the committee on transportation and communications of the House of Representatives.

MALACAÑANG/B14

Oracle sees 3 growth drivers for Asia Pacific

By Leo Magno

THE LINUX open source operating system, grid technology, and mid-market packaged applications will be the three biggest technology business drivers in the next 12 months, according to the Asia Pacific head of software company Oracle Corp.

Despite being hit by viral epidemics and general slowdown in technology adoption in the past year, the Asia Pacific region still performed above par and is expected to recover in the next 12 months, said Derek Williams, executive vice president for Oracle Corp. Asia Pacific Division.

The Asia Pacific Division of Oracle include

ORACLE/B15

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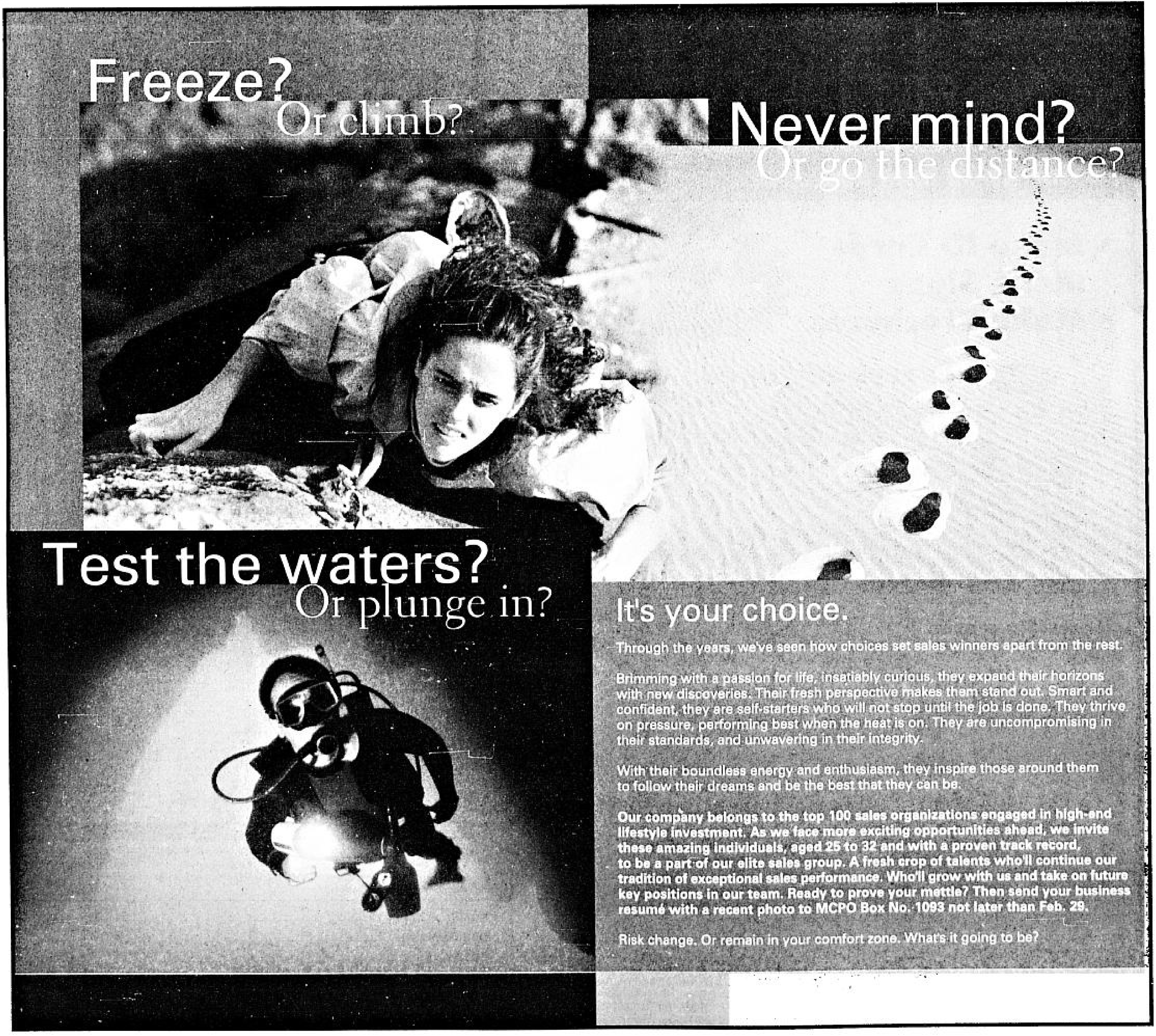

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Diving deep into aquaculture ventures

By Dennis M. Arroyo
Contributor

SMALL fishermen are catching less fish over the years, as coastal resources are getting depleted. It thus makes more sense to grow fish rather than look for them in the sea.

Fisherfolk can rise out of poverty and ensure incomes if they shift to aquaculture. Through aquaculture, they deal with the same product and work in the same environment, but enjoy greater yields.

Here are some options recommended in a paper written by Wilfredo G. Yap for the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

Fish cages in the sea

The technology is not new. Milkfish (bangus) and saline-tolerant tilapia can be grown in fish cages.

A typical cage has a diameter of 15-19 meters and a depth of 15 meters. It can yield 30 to 60 metric tons of milkfish. It takes 120 to 150 days to grow them, and their feeds are largely sourced from soybeans.

"What's more, the milkfish produced, with an average body weight of 0.5 kilograms, are larger than those produced in land-based ponds," says Yap.

"Being reared purely on an artificial diet in oceanic waters, it also has no chance to develop an off-flavor and can therefore command a better price."

Grow fish with rice

There is much opportunity for growth in freshwater aquaculture. Rice farms, which total more than 1.5 million hectares, are suitable for growing fish.

The farmers can clearly increase their income by engaging in fish-cum-rice culture. The practice will also enrich their families' protein intake.

Initial attempts to popularize the shift had failed due to various reasons.

Irrigation did not supply enough water for the fields. The pesticides would poison the fish. There was a lack of fingerlings during the weeks they were most needed. And the short life cycle of the rice did not give enough time for the fish to reach their best size.

The problems can be easily remedied. Fish-cum-rice cultivation should be limited to the areas where irrigation is reliable. The fish can be raised in a section separate from that of the rice. That is, the water flows in through the fish pond before it reaches the rice paddies.

Having a separate pond will also allow farmers to grow the fish independent from the rice.

Municipal mayors should put up nursery facilities for tilapia or carp fingerlings to increase the supply. The local governments will also do well to provide micro-financing for pond development.

Muscle up with mussels

Mussels and oysters can be grown at a very low cost, and the nation has not even scratched the surface of this industry. Less than a tenth of the hectares suited for mussel and oyster farming are actually used.

Growing these shellfish does not require much capital or high-level skills. It is a labor-intensive activity that can provide supplemental income for the rural poor. The products can also be processed for export. Because they are cheap, they can even be converted into feed for carnivores like mud crabs, lobsters and groupers.

The real problem with shellfish farming is the red tide phenomenon. When the algae bloom and are consumed by the clams, the latter can induce poisoning among humans. The algae do not actually harm the shellfish nor stunt its growth.

"Once the red tide bloom disappears it does not take long for the mussels and oysters to become fit for human consumption," says Yap. "With a vigilant red tide monitoring and warning system in place, the red tide hazard can be greatly minimized."

In fact the red tide phase allows the shellfish time to multiply and grow. Entrepreneurs do not lose money; they only have to wait for the red tide episode to end. It is more a cash flow problem. So the trick is to grow mussels and oysters as an additional source of income.

Crack the market with crabs

Mud crabs can be grown in mangrove areas without any damage to the environment. Pens made of bamboo sticks are installed between the trees. They are lined with coarse nets, and are covered with plastic sheets. The nets and the plastic are needed to prevent the crabs from escaping.

During low tide, the crabs take refuge in shallow ditches. The crabs, stocked at one crab per square meter, eat the pest golden snail.

Just a hectare of these mangrove pens yields as much as 1,400 kilos of crabs. The simple technology does not involve cutting down any more mangroves trees—most of the mangrove forests have already been depleted. Entrepreneurs can easily avail themselves of the technology to produce mud crab seedstock.

Now, if only entrepreneurs get a little more crab mentality... *Comments to darroyo@philonline.com.*

Technology out of necessity

By Salvador I. Sibayan
Contributor, UP Institute for Small-Scale Industries

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS

IF YOU'RE a small businessman and you're still resisting the temptations (and expense) of information and computer technology, listen to the story of Rosalinda, an accounting executive who is now in business for herself.

Retrenched at 36 and suddenly a housewife with two kids, she felt disoriented.

"I tried to look for a job at my age," recalls this CPA who used to head an accounting department of 50 people. "When I did, one of the first companies that showed interest in me was a company operating a chain of motels. Although the position and compensation were good, I had to turn it down. I just couldn't accept being part of that business."

The next prospective job looked promising. But the manager told her: "You have good credentials, but you don't know Lotus 1-2-3. " That was it. She told her husband she had to learn to use electronic spreadsheet.

"But rather than spend money on a seminar, my husband suggested we use the money on a computer and a dot matrix printer and learn on my own. And I did, initially Wordstar, and later on Lotus—with my husband filling me in on the finer points."

It was her husband who referred her to her first client, a publishing house that needed accounting systems and procedures. This was followed by others: one selling automotive parts, another in vegetable trading and trucking and still another providing talents to advertising companies.

These put an end to her job hunting and started her on freelancing as a C.P.A. with her own small firm.

When one of her clients complained that he couldn't get in touch with her, he gave her a beeper, charged against her monthly retainer. But she couldn't return the call, especially when she was on the road. So when the rates of cell phones became affordable, she got one.

And when clients needed to send documents, she had to get a fax machine. She thought that was the end of it. But when they had to correspond by e-mail, she had to get an Internet connection.

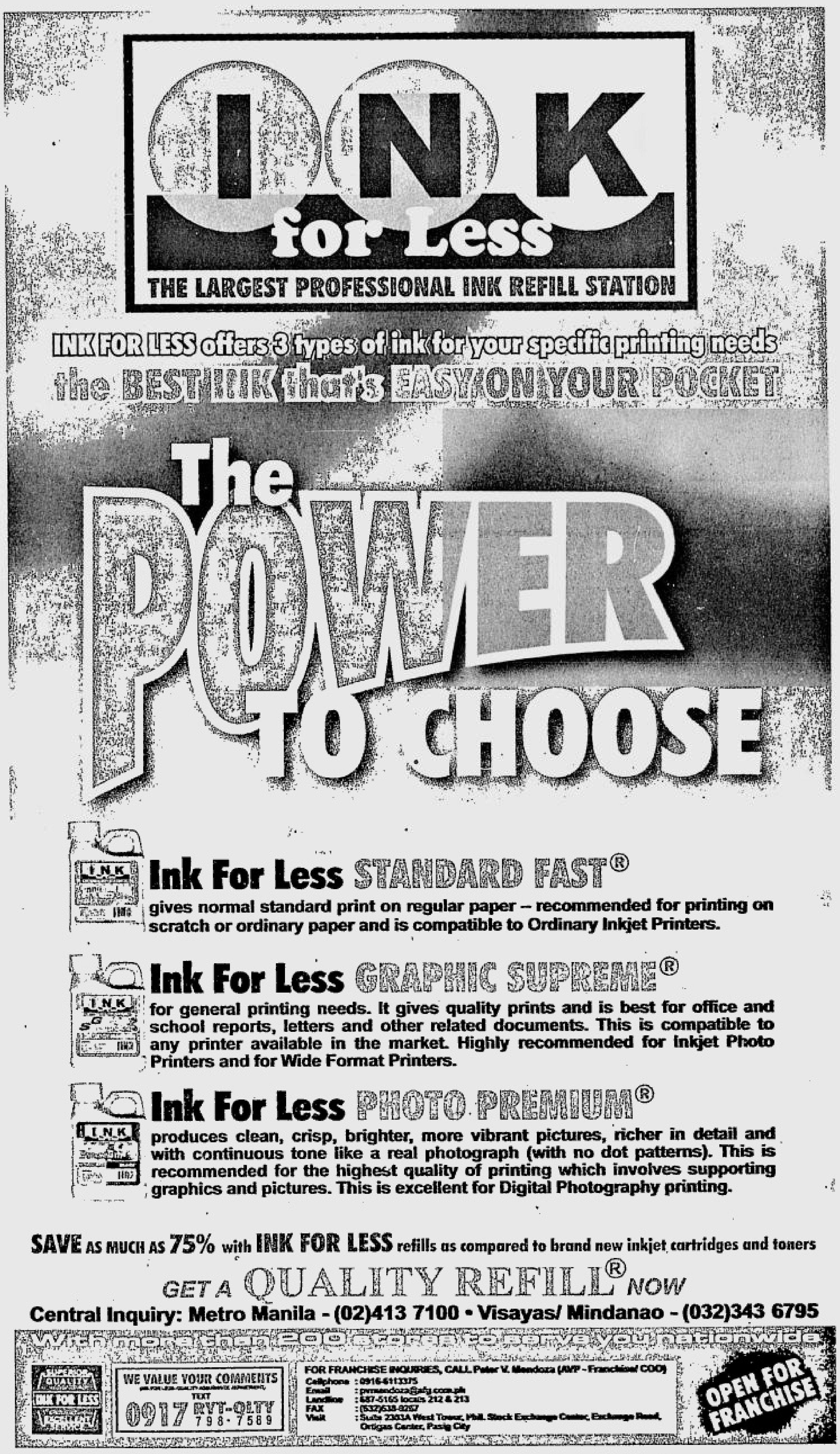
All the while, clients would come and go, ranging from micro to medium, from a few employees to a hundred. Some were in services, others in trading, and a few in manufacturing. She would replace her dot-matrix with bubble jet and laser printers, Wordstar with Word, and Lotus 1-2-3 with Excel.

Now readily accessible by phone, cell phone, fax, and e-mail, Rosalinda found her clientele growing. Soon, she was hiring accounting clerks on a project basis. This required buying additional computers. Still, she finds the audit season particularly tough.

Did she have a long-term plan for all these? No. But she had set some rules at the start. She wouldn't do any bookkeeping work. She made sure that in any audit or tax engagement she could satisfy client requirements for possible repeat business or referrals.

She continues to attend tax and accounting seminars to keep abreast of developments. To avoid paying office rent, she still operates from the house as she has done for the past 17 years.

(Check out upcoming small business courses of the U.P. Institute for Small-Scale Industries: Programmable Logic Controller, Feb. 21; Strategic Marketing, Feb. 21; Improve Your Business, Feb. 28; Manager's Course, March 6)



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4 Insular Life officers promoted

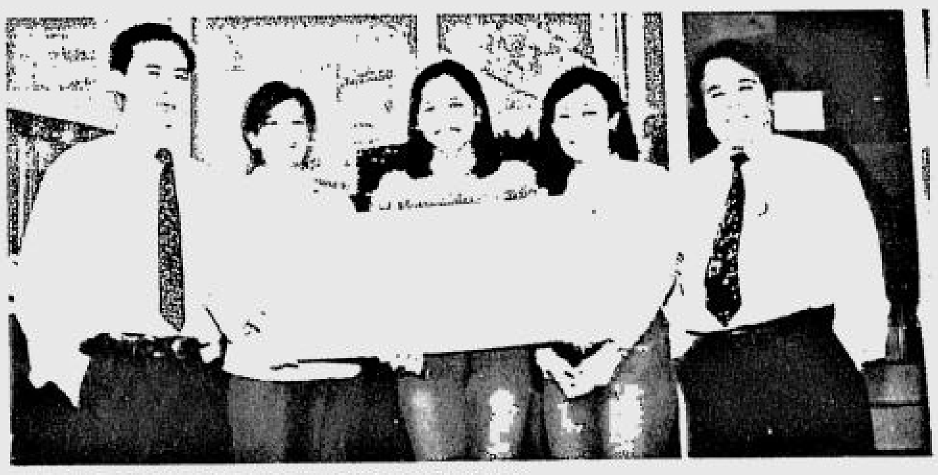
INSULAR LIFE board chair and president Vicente R. Ayllon recently announced the promotion of Seraline L. Manguni to vice president, Laarni F. Garraton and Aileen R. Beltrano to senior assistant vice president, and Aileen Gail R. Guirey to assistant vice president.

Manguni joined Insular Life's actuarial research and product development staff in 1991. She was seconded to Insular Life's subsidiary, I-Care, as first vice president, head of technical operations, and actuary. As head of the actuarial staff, she oversaw the underwriting, rating, and benefit design of the business in order to ensure adequate and competitive pricing of products. She is also tasked with overseeing the operations of the company's management information system. She graduated magna cum laude with a BS Statistics degree from the University of the East. She is a Fellow of the Actuarial Society of the Philippines and the Life Management Institute, and is a member of the International Actuarial Association.

Garraton, who joined the company in 1998, was seconded to I-Care as vice president, chief financial officer and head of its administrative operations. She was also in charge of the company's members relations department, which has responsibilities over lay underwriting of applications, processing of membership cards and policies, billing and collection, and membership database. She also had control over accounting and treasury, purchasing, inventory planning and control and general services. She is a summa cum laude graduate of Laguna College of Business and Arts with a Bachelor of Science Commerce degree, major in Accounting. She is a certified public accountant, and is an active member of the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Beltrano joined Insular Life in 2000 as assistant vice president and regional manager of the company's Metro Manila Central Region. Under her leadership, her region garnered the Region of the Year award during Insular Life's 2002 National Sales Drive. She was recently appointed head of worksite marketing division where she was tasked with marketing and managing Insular Life's group and salary savings insurance products. Beltrano earned her Mass Communications degree from St. Scholastica's College.

Guirey, who joined Insular Life in 1991, was with the company's actuarial research and product development staff. She was tasked with designing and pricing life insurance products that are competitive and meet the profit targets of the company. She also conducted research and analysis relevant to the company's quality of business, assets and liabilities, operating expenses, and claims experience, the results of which are used to help management in planning and decision-making. She was recently sworn in as a Fellow of the Actuarial Society of the Philippines. Guirey obtained her BS in Applied Mathematics from De La Salle University.



TEXT-BASED PROMO WINNERS BARED

CDO-Foodsphere Inc, a key player in the processed meat industry, bared its monthly winners for November and December for the text raffle promo dubbed CDO Karne Nortext, Cash Papremyo that ended Jan.31. The winners were Analyn C. Asaytuno (shown, center), 27, an elementary school teacher in Matino, Albay who bagged P250,000 and Teresa Vicho, 28, a customer assistant of LBC courier service in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, who won P500,000, tax free. Both winners flew in and stayed in Manila recently in an all-expense paid trip to personally receive their checks from CDO. The monthly winner for the P1-million grand raffle draw for January was drawn Feb. 2 and will be announced soon. For November, the raffle promo had 29 daily winners of P10,000 plus the monthly winner of P250,000 and for December, 31 daily winners plus the monthly winner of P500,000. For January, there were 31 daily winners plus the grand raffle draw winner of P1 million. All told, CDO gave away over P3.5 million in cash prizes for the raffle winners. Shown with Asaytuno are officials of CDO-Foodsphere Inc, from left, marketing manager Jonathan Bendicion, assistant general manager Maritess Escarcha, assistant product manager Sharon Joy Punzalan and VP for sales and marketing Ed Reataza.

ADBOARD ACRC'S APPRECIATION PARTY

The AdBoard's Advertising Content Regulation Committee (ACRC) recently held its appreciation party Jan. 22 at the New World Renaissance Hotel. Shown are (first row): Yletter Rose Reoma, screening coordinator, Yeng Dy, ACRC assistant and Cris Honrado, ACRC coordinator. Seated, from left, are Emi Pascual (Publicis), Chic Satuito (Brand Asia), Elaine Go-Mapa (Belgosa Publishing), Bien Fernando (Alaska Milk Corp), Socky Pitargue (PC&V), Cerge Remonde (AdBoard chair), Jose Sy (ACRC chair), Josie Tan-Magtoto (Mr & Ms Publishing), Vicky Centeno (Women's Home Companion), Anthony Cumaguin (PAC Comm), and Marvie Samala (Bankee Trading). Standing, from left, are lawyer Mario Santos (ABS-CBN), Vira Arceo (RSA Marketing), Danny Sembrano (Tactica Advertising), Irish Sun (Okachi Neon), Marivic Gonzales (Caballero & Associates), Edwin Valera (MOD Magazine), Jones Campos (Globe Telecom), Frank Abueva (Advertising Associates), Fely Rosales (LandBank), Alice Dy Echo (Manulife), Tess Ramirez (Tower Publishing), Rona Quejada (Total), Bess Zamora (Today), Jaz Bunag (Metrobank), Oscar Valenzuela (AdBoard executive director) and Dodie Diaz (DPR Comstrat). At the back row, from left, are Rogen Buan (Astro Advertising), lawyer Junie Lutian (Procter & Gamble), Audie Orleans (Ace Saatchi & Saatchi), Ricky Velez (Protective Systems), Ed Acosta (Billboard Marketing Inc), Mila Marquez (Lowe Inc), Beth Flores (Ott Louie), Ricky Estrada (General Milling Corp), Bobby Banaag (Planters Bank), Ron Tamayo (Monica Publishing Inc), Manny Hermosa (Gallardo & Associates), Ed Estrada (Image Dimensions), Lito Yabut (Primax Bctg.) and Adie Pena (PLW).

DILG exempts Alay-Lakad plates

THE ALAY-LAKAD Foundation Inc (Alfi) announced that its commemorative motor vehicle plates, issued in time for its 31st founding anniversary, exempts cars from the Metro Manila Development Authority's (MMDA) coding system by virtue of an official directive from Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose D. Lina Jr.

The commemorative plates, which are valid up to Nov. 16, were approved and authorized recently by the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) mainly through the efforts and recommendation of Secretary Lina, who is one of Alfi's trustees. The Secretary has officially written to Philippine National Police (PNP) Director General Hermogenes E. Ebdane Jr to direct police officers assigned to the streets to extend courtesy to motorists whose cars bear the Alay-Lakad plates. Lina issued the letter to the PNP Chief in view of complaints raised to Alay-Lakad last year about some police officers refusing to recognize the Alay-Lakad commemorative plates.

As part of Alfi's fund-raising campaign for its socio-economic projects for out-of-school youngsters, the plates will be made available to all individual and institutional members of the Foundation as well as to the general public. Alfi president Frank Evaristo said that so far, the Foundation has funded 600 projects with more than 50,000 out-of-school youth beneficiaries nationwide.

Following Land Transportation Office (LTO) guidelines, only private vehicles are authorized to use the Alay-Lakad plate and it should be displayed at the front of a duly registered vehicle by superimposing it on the LTO's license plate. A Certificate of Authorization and windshield sticker will be issued with each plate to prevent the unauthorized transfer of the plate to another vehicle.

Only 500 commemorative plates are available. Interested motorists may place their reservations and acquire them at the Alay-Lakad Foundation secretariat, 1680 Benitez corner Malvar Streets, DSWD Compound, Malate, Manila, Call 523-1359 or 522-6134. The Alfi executive director is Raffy Cosuco.

Diabetes is also a heart disease

DIABETES is a complex disease that can be difficult to understand and an even greater challenge to manage. Life-threatening complications such as heart disease and stroke often accompany this disease. It is estimated that two out of three diabetes patients will eventually succumb to heart disease. Alarmingly, most people who have diabetes are unaware of their increased risk for heart disease and stroke.

People who have diabetes that go undetected and untreated face an increased risk for heart disease because atherosclerosis may occur at an earlier-than-expected age and is more severe in diabetics. Atherosclerosis is the process wherein fatty substances, inflammatory cells, cellular waste products and other molecules build up on the inner wall of an artery. This fat build-up can rupture and block blood flow to the heart

Those who have diabetes-related atherosclerosis in their coronary arteries sometimes suffer what is called "silent ischemia" or silent heart attack. Silent, in this case, means without typical pain because neuropathy, or nerve damage, can result from uncontrolled diabetes.

The good news is that the complications of diabetes can be prevented through effective disease management. Traditionally, strategies for the management of type 2 diabetes include diet and exercise followed by monotherapy of anti-diabetic agent. However, clinical trials, such as the landmark United Kingdom Prospective Diabetes Study (UKPDS) showed that these traditional strategies do not effectively manage insulin resistance and beta-cell dysfunction, the underlying causes of type 2 diabetes, and fail to achieve long-term blood sugar (glycemic) control. Poor management of the underlying causes of diabetes often leads to cardiovascular diseases and other serious complications.

Thiazolidinediones such as rosiglitazone, a class of drugs that reduces insulin resistance, have demonstrated improvements in both insulin sensitivity and beta-cell function, even when combined with either metformin or sulfonylurea. The positive effects on the range of cardiovascular risk factors suggests that early combination therapy based around thiazolidinedione may also have benefits in reducing the heavy burden of cardiovascular disease in type 2 diabetes.

A study done by Drs. Jane Reusch and Roger Gadsby published in the journal Diabetes Technology and Therapeutics about the benefits of aggressive and early use of thiazolidinedione therapy in type 2 diabetes revealed that the combination therapy of rosiglitazone and metformin or sulfonylurea reduce insulin resistance by 51 percent and 17 percent respectively over six months of therapy. Likewise, there was a 94-percent and 72-percent improvement in beta-cell function over 26 weeks on addition of rosiglitazone to metformin or sulfonylurea respectively.

With type 2 diabetes slowly becoming a global epidemic, there is a clear and urgent need for a therapy that would effectively manage the disease. The addition of thiazolidinediones in the doctor's armamentarium against diabetes will surely benefit more than 300 million people around the world who are suffering from this chronic disease.

Bits & Clips

Canadian universities in RP

COME and discover what Canada has to offer in terms of world-class education. Representatives from the University of Toronto, Queen's University, and the University of British Columbia is in Manila until Feb. 17 to provide you with all the information you need to know about studying in Canada. "This is the first time that three universities with such impressive international reputations have joined forces to visit the Philippines," said Canadian Ambassador Peter Sutherland. The University of Toronto is Canada's largest university, consistently ranked as Canada's top research institution. A truly residential and highly selective university, Queen's attracts top scholars from around the world to its scenic and residential campus in Kingston, Ontario. The University is recognized for its influence in the Arts, Sciences and professions. The University of British Columbia, one of Canada's leading universities, attracts award-winning faculty and outstanding students from around the world.

Free consultations

PRETTYLOOKS Hi Tech Beauty Center for Men and Women, one of the leading frontrunners in the field of cosmetic surgery, is holding free consultations and discounts on its products and services for the public this February. In a statement, Prettylooks president Susan Co-Ong said that the consultations, free for the general public, is part of its information dissemination campaign this month to give a clearer view on the advantages and benefits of the company's services, which include non-surgical facelift, breast augmentation, butt lift, noselift, face and body whitening, liposuction and cosmetic surgery, among others. For free consultations, call 889-4830/31, 687-7507, and 6875098.

Mendoza on Zero Waste

SONIA Mendoza, president of Mother Earth Unlimited, was a speaker in the Cardiff, Wales and Cork, Ireland Zero Waste International Conferences in October 2003. Mother Earth Unlimited, a non-government organization, goes around the country conducting free workshops on ecological waste management. Sonia is a commissioner in the National Solid Waste Management Commission representing the NGOs, co-chair of the environment committee of Soroptimist International, Makati Chapter, a member of GAIA and the Ecowaste Coalition and a Zero Waste fellow in the first Zero Waste Fellowship held in Berkeley California in June 2002. She will be a speaker in the First National Conference on Zero Waste in Paris, which will be held on May 13 and 14 at the French Parliament.

38th IWCPI national confab

THE INNER Wheel Clubs of the Philippines Inc, an organization composed of wives of Rotarians and is headed by President Aida Vera Cruz, opened Feb. 15 its 38th National Conference at the Manila Hotel with a huge number of delegates coming from all over the country in attendance. PCSO chair Livia "Honeygirl" S. De Leon was the guest of honor and speaker during the opening ceremonies, and the photo exhibits of the different clubs' activities were unveiled. Today's program will have no less than President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as guest of honor and keynote speaker. Elections for the IWCPI and IWCPFI officers will follow, after which a special talk by Dr. Becky Singson will be held. Fellowship among sister clubs will also mark the second day activity. A grand musical extravaganza featuring Walt Disney Adaptations closes the event.

Demand for ICT workers

IN A significant finding by the Giga Information Group and Software Outsourcing Research last year, the Philippines was touted as the world's best offshore alternative to India and has the potential of becoming the call center hub of Asia. To help educate Filipino students on career opportunities in ICT or ICT-enabled professions such as nursing, business and education, the STI Education Services Group (STI) has undertaken the 9th National Information Technology Convention (NITC), an ongoing nationwide tour of 9 different destinations this year. The 9th NITC will be at the Star City, Pasay City from Monday to Wednesday, Feb. 16-18; Olongapo Convention Center on Feb. 20; CAP Convention Center in Davao City on Feb. 25; and Family Country Convention Center in General Santos City on Feb. 28.

Technowars

FEU-EAST Asia College, one of the country's top information technology school, opens the year with an inter-high school quiz show focusing on IT and engineering aptly billed as Technowars. The eight candidates who will emerge as the top scorers from the nationwide school eliminations and regional finals will compete against each other in the televised grand finals on Feb. 16 at the FEU auditorium, and to be directed by veteran TV game show director Jay Altarejos. Partnering with FEU-East Asia College for this endeavor are IBM and SM. It is headed by the school vice-president Benson Tan and is organized by Events Creators Asia.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Children enjoy the interplay of an audiovisual experience and hands-on activity inside the newly opened Babyland store at Festival Supermall. The new store reflects Babyland's new concept of making each store a destination for mothers and babies where products are safe for babies, in addition to being educational and values oriented.

RLC's preview for Fifth Avenue Place

ROBINSONS Land Corp, (RLC), one of the country's leading real estate players, will be hosting a series of intimate cocktails for friends and business associates to witness an exclusive preview of the Fifth Avenue Place, RLC's newest high-rise residential project. This major event will be at 6 p.m. on Feb. 17, 18, and 19 at the Cameron Forbes Room of the Manila Polo Club. During this event, guests and prospective buyers will have a first-hand chance to become acquainted with the unique lifestyle and amenities that Fifth Avenue Place can offer. Located along Fifth Avenue and 21st Drive, it is a stone's throw away from international schools, retail and entertainment centers and other lifestyle establishments in the master-planned Global City. Want to experience the best in urban living at a price you can afford? Call 636-0888 or text 0922-838-0888, or e-mail info@robinsonsland.com for further details.

A journey with the Filipino entrepreneur

MAPping THE FUTURE

Jesus P. Tambunting

I DO not know how it is with other managers, but in my case, I have always looked at my life and work as a journey.

At Planters Bank, we speak of that journey as a journey with the Filipino entrepreneur. When it began in 1972, I had no particular plans about traveling this way. I was a senior executive of one of our country's largest banks when I decided to strike out on my own and buy a small Bulacan-based development bank.

My business plan then was to begin small, grow the bank, transfer it to Makati and then transform it into a commercial bank catering to large corporate accounts.

But, it seems, God had other plans for me and our people. Because of the bank's small size and the provincial location of its first offices, we had no choice but to cater to the small businessmen and entrepreneurs in the region.

But what started as work born out of necessity soon turned into meaningful and gratifying work. Dealing with the small entrepreneurs opened my eyes to the wonderful realization that we were making an impact where it counted most—with the marginalized sectors and the small entrepreneurs in the countryside.

And we felt good about it.

At this point, we had reached a critical crossroads in our journey, and we chose the road less taken. Our plan changed from growing the bank and becoming like other commercial banks to focusing on SMEs and proving that it was a viable business proposition.

We wove corporate social responsibility into the way we did business. And we vowed that no matter how big our bank became, we would always stay committed to SMEs.

But there were no models to follow. We had to learn by trial and error and improvise along the way. We have never regretted our decision. What sustained us all throughout was our deep faith in the SMEs, our dogged determination to make an impact, and the success stories of many SMEs that we assisted. Our road map was clear at this point. We had firmly set our course.

Business strategy

From a few tentative steps, we started to take firmer strides and shift into high gear in providing the best possible financial services to the SMEs.

Then as now, it has been our deliberate strategy to grow Planters Bank not only internally, but through a series of mergers and acquisitions. We bought four other smaller banks in the early years. Through these acquisitions, we were able to expand our reach to SMEs through a nationwide network of branches.

More recently, we acquired two more banks, Active Bank and Region Bank, which allowed us to reach even more SMEs.

A second major development was the acquisition of foreign institutional partners, which to this day I still regard as God-sent graces in our history. In 1983, in the midst of the national crisis, the Netherlands Development Finance Co. (FMO) believing in our vision, became Planters Bank's first foreign shareholder. This was historic.

In 1987, we scored another banking milestone when the Asian Development Bank or ADB became a shareholder of Planters Bank, marking the first private equity investment in the Philippines by the ADB.

Again, in 2000, when confidence in the local economy was at its lowest, the International Finance Corp. of the World Bank Group invested $25.5 million or over a billion pesos in equity and financial assistance, a clear vote of confidence in the country, and in Planters Bank and our mission.

Collectively, FMO, ADB and IFC own 40 percent of Planters Bank today.

Thirdly, as all these things were happening, the Planters Bank model for SME finance took shape and continued to evolve. It was shaped by our passion and commitment to the SMEs, and informed by the need to be viable if we were to serve the SMEs long into the future.

And it is the result of years of first-hand experience in working with SMEs, and of partnering with funding agencies, international organizations and government. With our focused implementation of our business strategy and model, we have become the bank we are today.

Planters Bank today

From an asset base of P500,000 when we acquired Bulacan Development Bank, Planters Bank has grown to become the 22nd largest banking institution among 42 universal and commercial banks, 94 thrift banks and close to 800 rural banks.

In terms of revenue, it is among the top 250 corporations with a nationwide network of 70 branches. And, for the past 12 years, Planters Bank is the recipient of numerous awards and citations from government, multi-lateral and guarantee institutions for excellence in SME finance

How did we do it?

How did we transform our focus on the small entrepreneur into a dynamic force for the growth and transformation of our bank?

First, we were single-mindedly focused and committed to SMEs. From the shareholders down to the last staff member, lending to SMEs has become a passion and way of life at Planters Bank.

Second, we learned to improvise and devise innovative approaches to lending to SMEs. Because SMEs do not have reliable financial statements, our lending officers learned to use surrogate indicators.

Third, we managed our credit risks. We consciously built a diversified loan portfolio. Because of the inherently higher risks in SME lending, we required our loans to be secured by hard collateral and/or guarantees from government guarantee institutions which also served as effective mechanisms to ensure financial discipline among our borrowers.

Fourth, we were always profit-driven. While we found purpose and fulfillment in dealing with SMEs, we never lost sight of the fact that we had to make profits to stay in business.

Fifth, we maintained a long-term orientation and a developmental perspective. We did not hesitate to walk the extra mile to ensure our clients' success.

Stake in development

But perhaps even more important than all these factors is the fact that in focusing on SME lending, we were aligning ourselves with an indispensable force for our country's economic development—the small and medium enterprises in our countryside.

Throughout our partnership with the Filipino entrepreneur, there was always this transcendent factor that we were not only doing business and making a profit, but we were also contributing in a vital way to national progress.

The great importance of SMEs in our national life cannot be overstated. After the apparent failure of past industrialization policies emphasizing the development of large enterprises, SMEs are acknowledged more and more as a promising strategy for stimulating economic growth.

Today, Philippine SMEs account for 90 percent of registered business enterprises, contribute 25 percent of GNP, and provide jobs to half of our labor force. They are considered a lead sector in stimulating economic growth, alleviating poverty and promoting a strong middle-class.

Recently, Her Excellency President Macapagal-Arroyo, requested us to prepare a proposal for improving SMEs access to credit. Many of our recommendations have been adopted under the country's National SME Development Plan.

In recognition of the success of our Planters Bank model, we have been asked to share our SME learning with other developing countries. We set up SME lending desks for the Punjab Small Industries Corporation in Pakistan and the Industrial Bank of Yemen.

We have trained bankers from other developing countries such as Pakistan, Sri-Lanka, China, Bhutan, Mongolia, Western Samoa. With IFC, we helped establish a banker's training center for SME lending in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. At the moment, one of our senior executives is posted with the Development Bank of Micronesia as senior adviser.

Success stories

We continue to innovate and refine our approaches. Convinced that micro finance is an effective strategy for poverty alleviation, we set up in 2001 the Micro-Enterprise Bank in partnership with IFC and FMO. The bank caters to the entrepreneurial poor.

We also set up SME.Com again with IFC to provide SMEs with web-based business solutions designed to help them manage their businesses better, expand markets and become globally competitive. Our website is a venue for SMEs to reach foreign markets and grow their businesses on a global scale.

One good example is Godiva, a natural skin care company, which developed their export market through our website. It was awarded the IT Excellence Award, the first and only major award given by the Philippine Internet Commerce Society.

Some of you may have also heard about Splash Manufacturing, the personal care products company established 15 years ago with a capitalization of only P15,000, mixing and bottling hair spray by hand in a small "accessoria."

The company is now listed in the Philippine Top 250 corporations with annual gross turnover of close to P3 billion.

We are also proud of Avatar Accessories, which exports fashion jewelry. The firm has won various awards including the prestigious Swarovski Jewelry Design Competition.

Tentay Patis, a Golden Shell Awardee, is also another great SME success story.

There are many more of these success stories among the more than 15,000 small and medium enterprises we have financed over the last three decades. As a banker, nothing for me is more gratifying than seeing clients succeed.

The road ahead

As we move on in our journey, we at Planters Bank will remain steadfast in our commitment to SMEs and to our vision of becoming globally-competitive and among the best managed banks. Our branches will be points of presence in SME-prime areas, offering a whole range of value-adding products and services for the Filipino entrepreneur.

We have indeed been blessed, and as we savor our blessings, we commit to do more for the SME sector. It is in this spirit that I would like to seize the opportunity to invite MAP to join us in our journey with the Filipino entrepreneur.

MAP has been at the forefront of promoting good corporate governance, moral leadership and effective management in our country. Under your leadership, we can rally the business sector to support the SMEs.

All of us here deal with the SMEs in our everyday course of business. They are our suppliers, distributors, retailers, service providers, buyers and clients. As MAP members, we can treat them as business partners and allow them a fair return on their investments through timely payments, reasonable pricing and share with them technology, management skills and best practices.

MAP can use its vast resources and influence to encourage others to do the same. Together, we can help create an enabling environment for SMEs to realize their full potential in the blueprint for national development.

This is a lofty dream, but as managers and leaders we all know that the greatest and noblest journeys begin with a single step. And it is the countless individual steps, taken together, that bring us to our most cherished destinations.

I do not know where the coming elections will take us or where our politics is leading us. But in the corner where I work, in the mission to which we at Planters Bank have dedicated ourselves, we know and we believe that we are helping a sector that is of great importance to our nation's future. And so long as we keep doing this, and SMEs continue to do their thing, we know there is hope in our country.

(The author is the Management Association of the Philippines' "Management Man of the Year" for 2003 and Chair of the Planters Development Bank. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

What to wear to a casual affair?

GOODNESS GRACES

Lia S. Bernardo

Q: MY HUSBAND and I have been invited to dinner at his CEO's home, along with five other couples, to honor those who have been with the company for 10 years. The attire is casual. What should I wear? Should I bring a gift? If so what would be appropriate?

A: If the attire is casual, my suggestion would be for you to wear a simple knee length dress or dress pants and a simple blouse. Stick with solid colors as this is more elegant, do not use anything with loud prints or loud colors such as oranges, fuschia and the like. Go easy on your jewelry, a string of pearls is always nice. Keep it simple and elegant and you won't go wrong.

Yes, sending or bringing a gift with you is appropriate. A flower arrangement delivered on the day of the dinner would be nice. You can also give your hosts a token hostess gift such as a scented candle, a coffee table book on a topic of interest to your hosts, a bottle of good red wine, or even a picture frame. Anything along those lines will do. And after the dinner do not forget to send a handwritten thank you card addressed to both your husband's boss and his wife, delivered to their home, thanking them for a nice evening.

Q: I have been invited to attend a dinner at my boss' home. Only a handful of us have been invited and we all suspect it is because we are going to be given promotions. My problem is that it will be a barbeque and I don't eat meat. I'm a vegetarian and I only eat vegetables and fish. Should I tell him ahead of time or will that offend him. Should I just eat meat on this one occasion?

A: First of all, if your boss invites you and your officemates over for dinner, even if it is only a selected few, I would not presume a promotion is going to take place. You may or may not receive one, but please do not expect this. If your boss is hosting a barbeque at his place, it may mean that he simply wants to get to know his staff in a more relaxed setting, give his team a thank you for your hard work or simply just a get together to relax outside the office setting.

Regarding your concern, you should inform him that you are a vegetarian. It is the responsibility of the guest to inform his or her host of any dietary restrictions or food allergies prior to the dinner or lunch. That way your host can prepare food that you will eat and enjoy. There is no reason you should force yourself to eat meat just because it's your at your boss' house.

Please email your business etiquette queries to etiquetteconsultants@hotmail.com names of senders will not be published.

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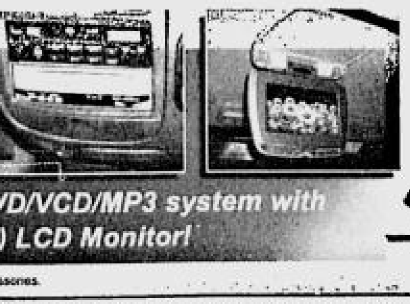

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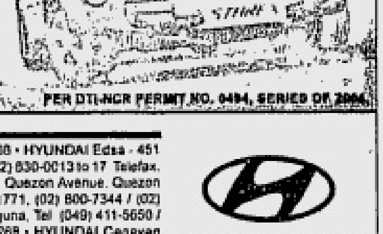

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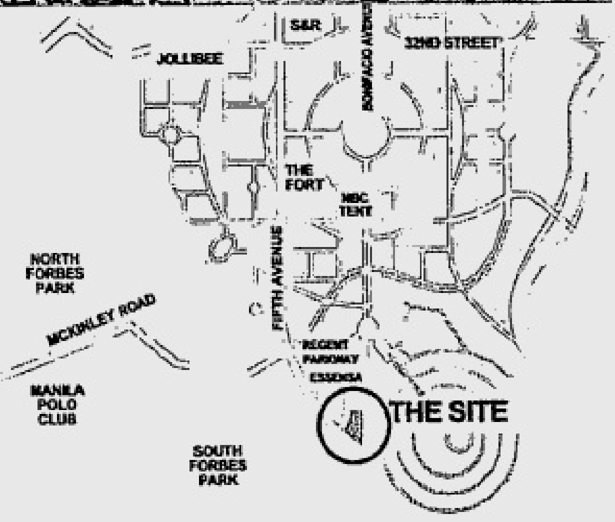
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Editor Louie C. Camino

I loved him more than my life, says Phillip Salvador's ex-lover

But is set to file charges against actor for defrauding her of ₱15 M

By Blaise C. Gacoscos
Contributor

HER mother never liked Phillip "Ipe" Reyes Salvador, according to businesswoman Cristina "Cherry" Bondoc Castillo, the actor's former lover who has accused Phillip of fleecing her of millions of pesos.

"Phillip doesn't love you. He is only after your money," was what her 63-year-old mother, Zenaida, said about the actor, Cristina said. She refused to listen.

But now, Cristina regrets that she did not listen to her mother.

For the first time since these issues became a subject in the entertainment gossip TV show "The Buzz," which is hosted by Phillip's former live-in partner Kris Aquino with whom he has a son, Joshua, 10, Cristina tells her side of the break-up of her relationship with the 50-year-old actor.

P25 M in two years

She told INQUIRER Entertainment that in the two years that she and Phillip were lovers, she had spent P25 million on him, including his candidacy for vice mayor of Mandaluyong in the 2001 elections and his daughter Barbara's wedding.

She also claimed to have paid P1 million to PSBank to stop the repossession of Phillip's Ford Expedition by the bank, and another half a million pesos to pay for his credit card expenses.

Cristina said she had shouldered Phillip's bills for water, power and dental check-ups, and had funded his bouncing checks. All this she did in exchange for his kiss.

"I loved him more than my life," Cristina confessed. "I was happy."

But she wants Phillip to pay her P15 million, which she said she had lent him about two and a half years ago. The money was supposed to secure her children's future, according to Cristina.

Four months after the 2001 elections, Phillip had borrowed P5 million from Cristina to pay off his debts, said the businesswoman.

"We were having a relationship. I loved him so I trusted him."

As a guarantee for the loan, Phillip had put up a condominium unit at the Pinnacle in Mandaluyong that Kris Aquino owned, Cristina said. She explained that she had prepared a Deed of Second Real Estate Mortgage (the unit had an existing mortgage with BPI), a Special Power of Attorney for Phillip to be able to transact on Kris' behalf, and a Deed of Absolute Sale. She said Phillip was supposed to sign these documents, but he refused until his older brother, Ramon Salvador, could review the papers.

Blinded by love

Four months later, Phillip asked Cristina for an additional P10 million to buy the condominium, which had been valued at P15 to P18 million, she said. She gave him the money again on Dec. 11, 2001.

"I was blinded by love," Cristina admitted.

But she was hoping that Phillip would give her the title of the condo unit. He did not, Cristina said, but Phillip had signed an "Acknowledgement Receipt" for P15 million as

I LOVED/ C3

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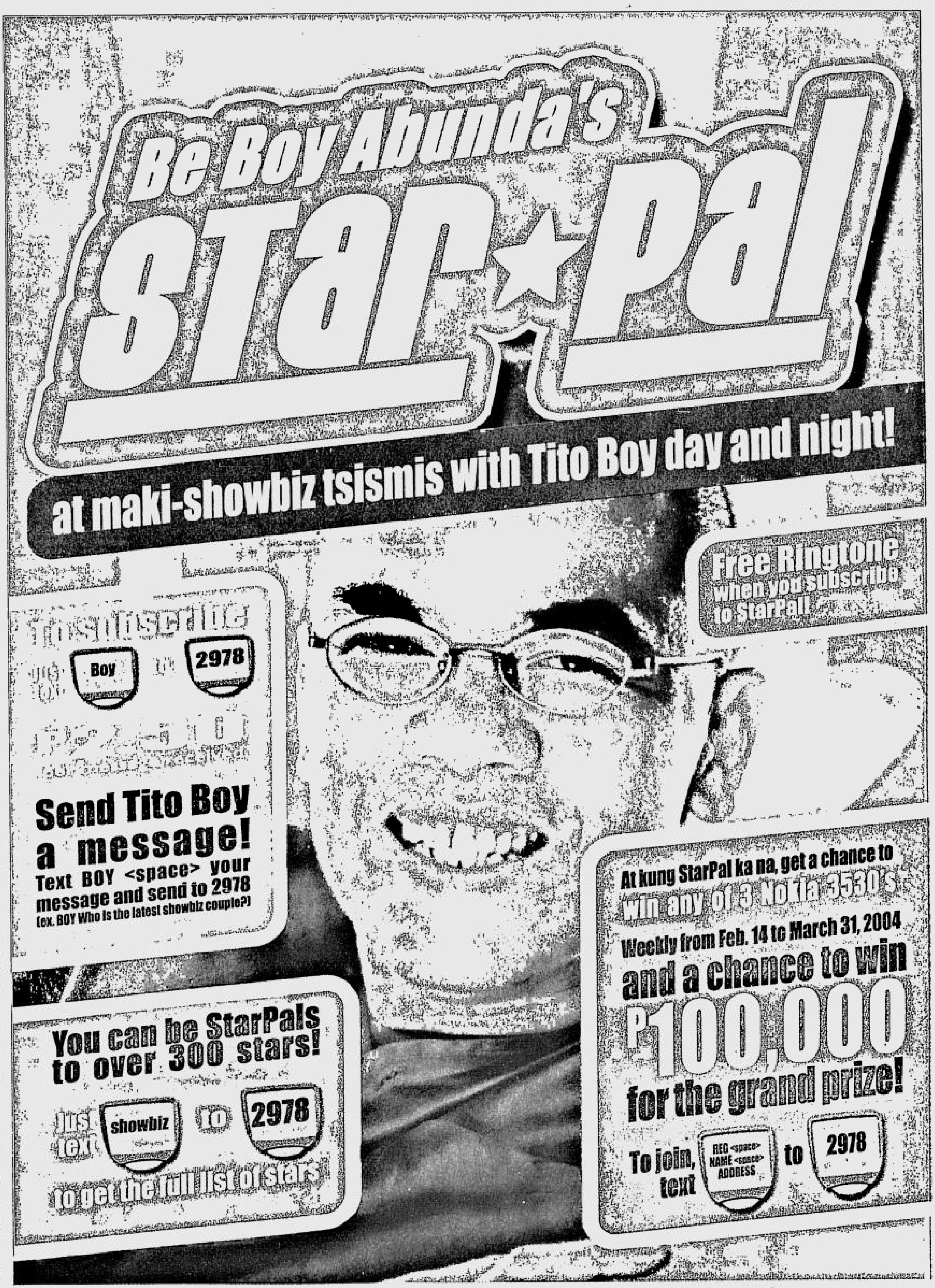

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A 'his and hers' affair and a dog with Burberry togs

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Jim Guiao Punzalan

OUT OF THE CLOSET

BASKETBALL star Vince Hizon and sportscaster Patricia Ann Bermudez, who were married two weeks ago, have a problem.

The couple has yet to have a major argument to get out of the way.

"That's actually a problem. We don't know how to fight," Vince told INQUIRER Entertainment during a visit at the couple's apartment in Makati City.

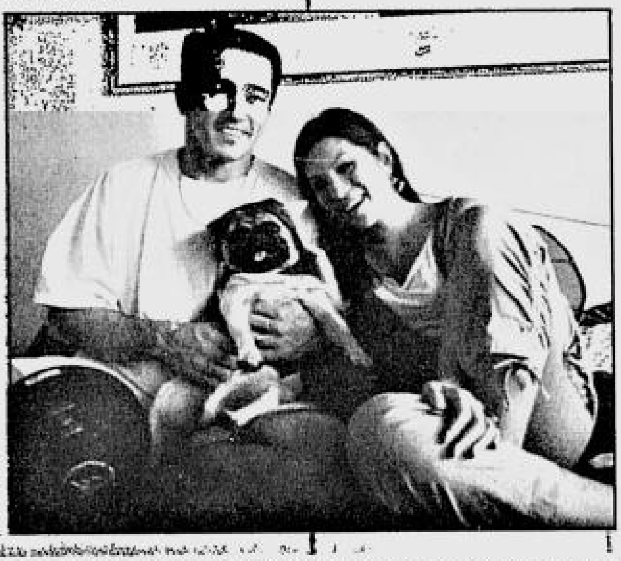
"We have no disagreements. We think alike, act alike and have the same views."

But Patricia is quick to disagree.

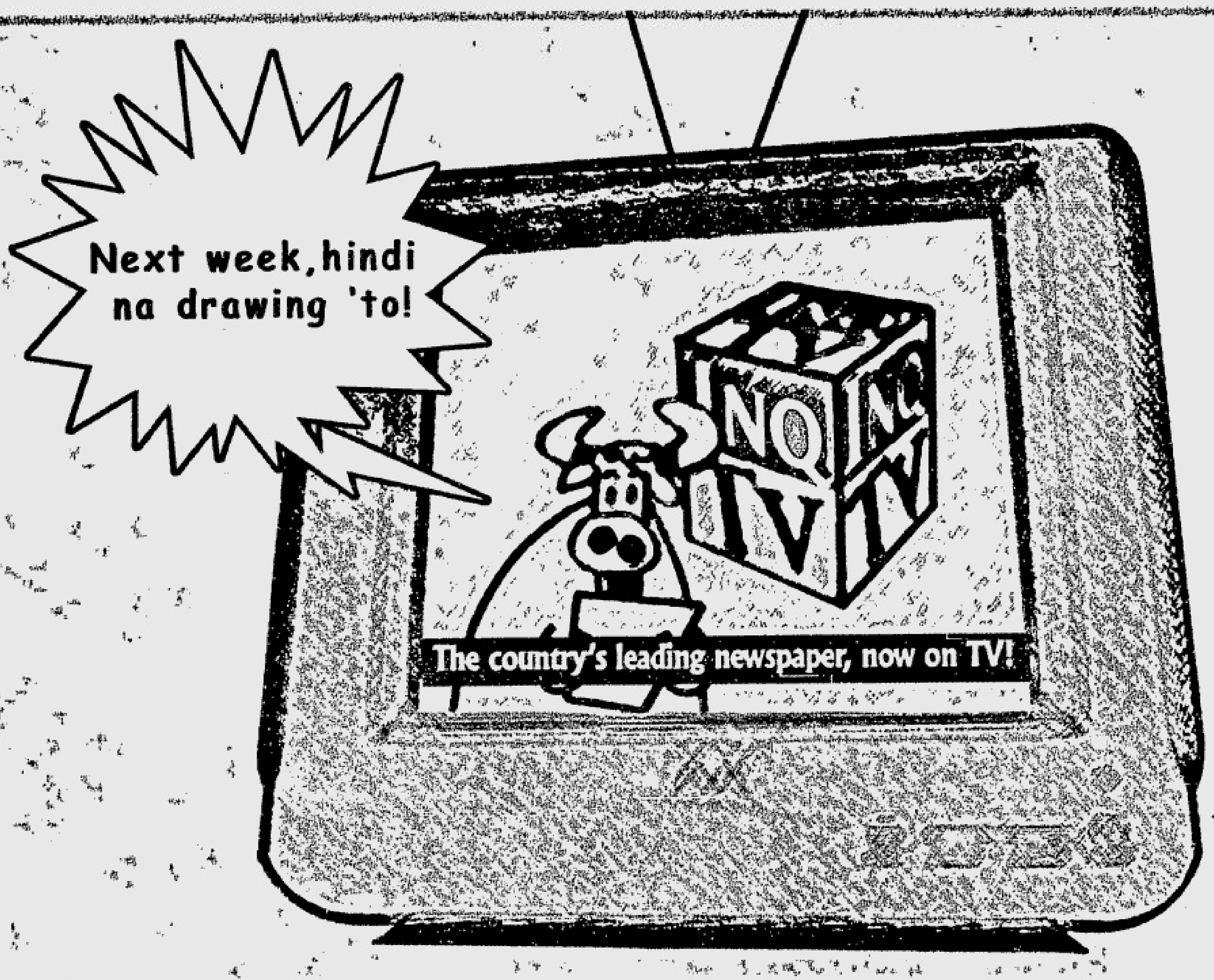
"We do disagree," she said. "But they're so petty-like 'don't tuck your shirt in' or 'why don't you close the closet door.' Minor things like that."

Dubbed as "The Prince" by sportscasters, Vince now plays for Red Bull Barako team in the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA). His wife, Patricia Ann, known as Shaan in sports circles, is a PBA sportscaster. Vince proposed to her on national television before a PBA game at the Araneta Coliseum

A HIS/ C3



NEWLYWEDS Vince Hizon and Shaan Bermudez share an apartment with a pug named Jawo, and try to fit their clothes in a closet that has grown too small for two people.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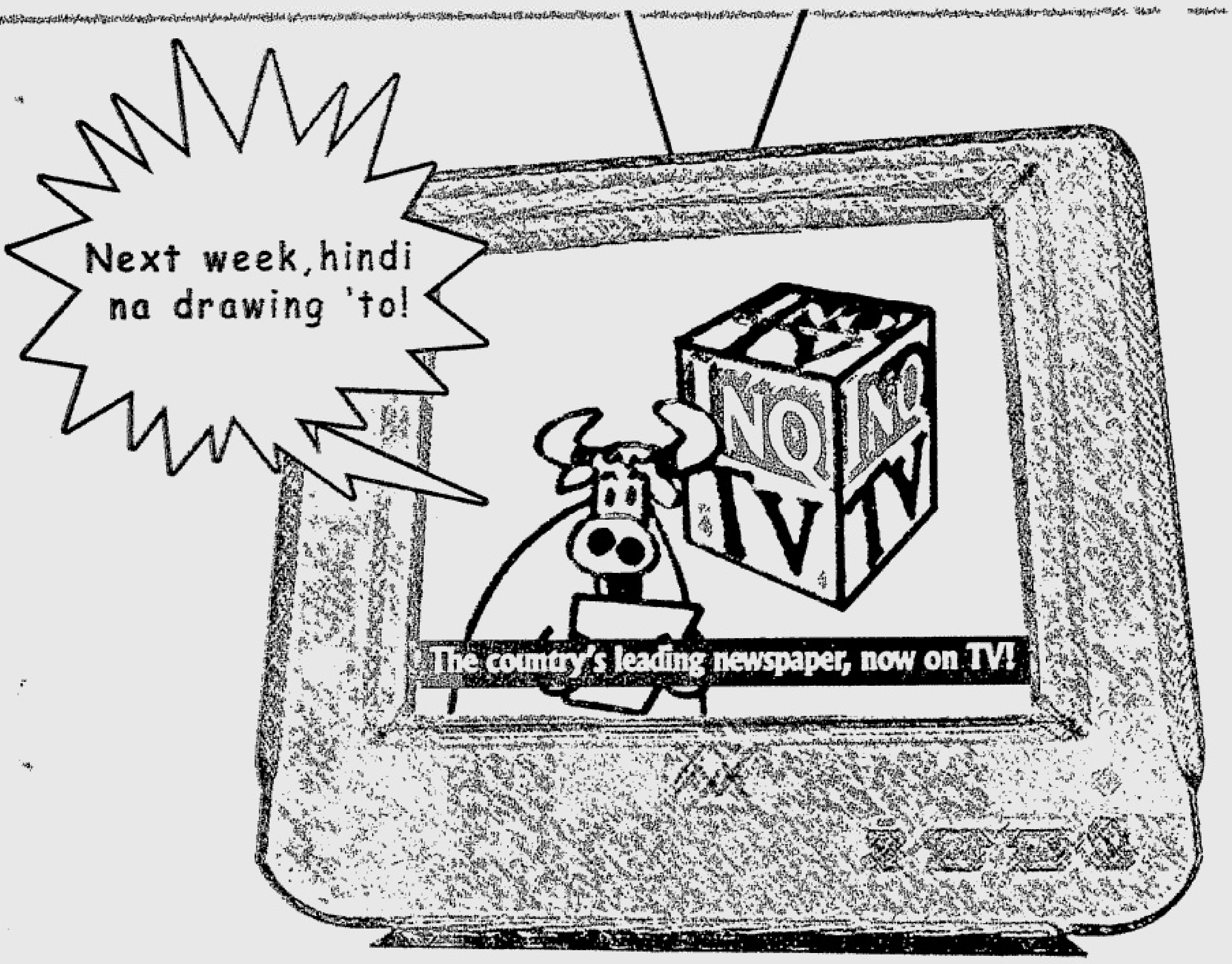
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A 'his and hers' affair . . .

From page C2

in Quezon City.

They were married seven months later in a beachfront wedding in the US.

For eight years, Vince lived as a bachelor, but the couple made no major adjustments on how they would live together, according to Shaan.

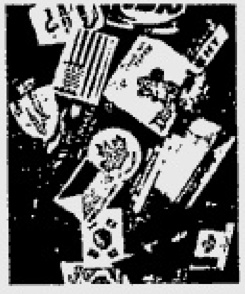
"We pretty much know each other's quirks," she said. "(Vince) has this habit of not closing the closet door, but he's trying to change it. In fact, he just did it today."

She moved in gradually to Vince's apartment. Last December, she started bringing her stuff to the flat, including a year-old pug, Jawo.

"I'm a neat freak. When you live with me, you have to put everything back to where you got it," Shaan revealed. "Vince just has certain habits that are hard to break. I adjust. I don't nag him about it."

The couple is expecting to move into their house in Loyola Grand Villa on Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City by the middle of this year.

"And one of the things we talked to the architect about is to make sure that we have ample closet space because more than half of my stuff is not even here," said Shaan.



A COLLECTION of patches from around the globe

Since she started living with Vince, Shaan has been giving away her husband's clothes to the beneficiaries of the Vince Hizon Foundation.

"To save space, I told him to give away whatever it is that he hasn't worn for the past year," Shaan explained. "I also have a lot of clothes that I've kept for years. I donated them to the less-fortunate through my foundation, too."

Her halter-tops. Shaan's favorite top is an off-shoulder outfit "because this is what I was wearing when Vince proposed to me. So I figured, this is a lucky outfit. It's something that I could never wear again because people say they remember me wearing it on that day."

Another top was found in a Charlotte Rush shop in Tijuana, Mexico last year. "It's one of those buy-one-get-three bargains. I wore this blouse a few hours before I got married. Instead of the usual robe, I wore this."

His polo-shirts. "Memo has some good stuff that actually fits me," said Vince. "It's the first time I've experienced that." His favorites include a shirt for smart casuals, which is "stylish enough to wear to little parties or for everyday." A colorful, floral shirt given to him by his brothers had given him a little nudge "They went, 'hey nice flowers!' Vince wore the shirt when he and Shaan had their engagement pictures taken.

A LAKERS T-shirt signed by Kobe Bryant

A WHITE top worn as a robe

Her dresses. Shaan hardly wears dresses, but her favorite is another find in the Tijuana, Mexico shop because "it's so pretty I can't wait to wear it to the Globe event I'm hosting tonight. She loves tube outfits, especially one that has an asymmetrical cut. "I don't like shirts or dresses that are below the knee because I find my legs too athletic. When I look for dresses, it has to be just below the knee or somewhere there. I have so many things to hide on my legs because of playing football and Taekwondo."

AN OVERSIZED pair of elephant pants big enough to fit him and her, but not at the same time

RED shoes for basketball

MADE by Burberry for Jawo, the pug

His suit. Vince favorite suit is the one given to him by Shaan as a Christmas gift. "This was made by Avel Bacudio, and is my first four-button suit." Shaan thinks Vince looks so handsome in his suits. She observes that most of his suits were "kind of old style *na*. He needs a new suit because we always have to go to these formal functions, so I got him one."

Her jersey. A P50 bargain from an ukay-ukay shop with the number 12 printed in front of it. 12 is Vince's number, and it has always been lucky for him. "I find this jersey really cool. I can never find another jersey that fits me as well. Basketball jerseys are always for guys or for kids, and never for girls."

TRINKETS for her arms, and tongs for her feet (below)

His jersey. Sleeveless and comfortable and can be worn anytime. "It's actually a nice shirt, in terms of quality. I wear this not just to play basketball. I actually walk around the world wearing this—in the mall in this, the theater, but not to go to church."

Her pants and jeans. A pair of Lonely Planet pants from Boracay where Shaan loves to shop even though the "clothes there are on the expensive side." She had a seamstress copy the design she really liked, like "this bohemian design." Shaan and Vince share another pair of elephant pants. Says Vince, "That's about the only thing that will fit me from her closet!"

Another favorite pair is from Mango. The pants work with sneakers and a black t-shirt. Shaan also owns lots of jeans. Lee, Levis and Jag are her favorites. She complains about her big butt. "I love it!" says Vince of her butt.

His jeans. "If she has a big butt, I have the biggest butt," says Vince. "Seriously, I like my Levi's jeans a lot. They're very comfortable. Even since Ateneo days, I already wore Levi's, especially 501s, because those were the only ones that actually fit me."

I loved him more than my life . . .

From page C1

"full payment" for the property.

On January 2002, Phillip gave the three documents that Cristina had prepared for him for the sale of the condo. The documents bore signatures of "Phillip Salvador" and "Kris A. Aquino," Cristina said. But when she asked for the title, Phillip admitted that the P10 million she had given him was used instead to pay for his other debts.

"I then blew my top," she said.

That same month, Phillip and Ramon provided Cristina three movie contracts with Regal Films' Lily Monteverde, Seiko Films' Robbie Tan, and Viva Films' Vic del Rosario as proof that the actor could pay his obligations, Cristina said.

Demand letter

Last week, Cristina and her lawyer Rizal Balbin were set to file charges against the brothers Phillip and Ramon "for conspiring in the commission of estafa and falsification." They sent the brothers a letter demanding them to "surrender" to Cristina the condo unit or return its purchase price of P15 million within five days upon receipt of the letter. Failure to take action would compel Cristina's lawyer to bring the case to court, the letter stated.

Cristina had been married to Danny Decena when she met Phillip. They have four daughters and one son.

The businesswoman came from impoverished Tondo family. She graduated cum laude at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines with Bachelor in applied economics. She put up her own business and is now the chief executive officer of the CBC Group of Companies, which deals in food, fashion, real estate, trading, education, and financing.

She met Phillip through her CBC Funds, a lending company that extended unsecured personal loans at 2.5 to 3 percent interest rates a month.

"I woke up one morning to find out that we were already together," she said.

Welcome visitor

Cristina's dentist and family friend, Dra. Natividad Aquino, had introduced Phillip to the businesswoman on Feb. 14, 2001. He had appeared in an activity of a school that Cristina owns. Since then, Phillip had become a welcome visitor even in the family's private resort in Malolos, Bulacan. It was in this resort that Phillip had spent Holy Week last 2001, according to Cristina.

Phillip and his brother Ramon had spent time in Cristina's house in Baguio shortly after his defeat in the 2001 polls. He was a guest of the family even when Cristina and her husband were abroad, she said. At that time, the couple was having problems with their marriage, which was finally annulled in November last year.

Still another woman

"Phillip took advantage of the situation," said Cristina. "When I had to deal with these problems, that's when he entered the scene. We became close. I thought that he liked me because I was still young."

She was then 32, and Phillip was 47. Cristina said she and the actor became intimate in August 2001. But they did not live together since the actor was seeing another woman. She later asked Phillip to live in her unit in Antel Platinum Tower in Makati, Cristina admitted.

Her children, too, had fallen in love with the actor, who showed them that he cared for them.

"He would hug my children and sleep with them."

Cristina claimed that Phillip had offered to marry her several times, but she had refused. She recalled that Phillip's older brother Ramon had told her, "I like you very much for my brother. I only ask you to make your relationship legal."

No go

But nothing took off in their relationship, even if Cristina had bought a house where she and Phillip would eventually live when her annulment goes through, and a piece of land in Terrazas de Punta Fuego, in Batangas.

Since her annulment had not yet been final, Cristina found she might have to share these new pieces of property with her estranged husband, Danny. This was when Ramon Salvador suggested to transfer the titles of these properties in his name since he had the "capacity to purchase."

"I trusted him since he would be my brother-in-law," Cristina said.

Gambling

There were other things that Cristina would discover about her lover. One was that he would bet on racehorses. She found out that he had called a racetrack betting station using her cell phone. The call was reflected on her July 16, 2003 to Aug. 16, 2003 cell phone bill. When she called the number to check, she found it to be a betting station.

"He would drag me down," Cristina said. "Should I also pay for his gambling? I finally woke up to the truth."

Cristina said she broke off with Phillip on Aug. 16, 2003. But she remained kind to the actor, who was still down and out, when he went to New York to look for his missing son by Sony Dabao. She gave him half a million pesos for pocket money, Cristina said. She sent him another $2,000 through a bank transfer when he had run out of money.

"I was scared that if I did not help him, I would lose more money."

On Sept. 10, 2003, Ramon sent her a text message, saying that Phillip had suffered a stroke and half of his body had been paralyzed. Ramon had asked her to go to America, but she stayed in the country since she had five children and several businesses to attend to. On Nov. 13, 2003, barely three months after Cristina had broken up with Phillip, the actor married Emma Karen Ledesma in Los Angeles, California.

No interviews with press

On Jan. 17, Cherry received an overseas phone call from Phillip. She said the actor had asked her not to give interviews to the media about their relationship.

"He told me he got the girl pregnant, but that she had a miscarriage last Dec. 28. He said he married her because I was not by his side. I told him, 'You got yourself a new victim. You should be ashamed of yourself. Go get a job.'"

Three days later, during a meeting with Kris Aquino at her Oakwood condominium, along with lawyers Nimfarina Cristobal and Raymond Fortun, tabloid columnist Cristy Fermin, and Ramon Salvador, Cristina found out that the signatures of Kris and Phillip on the Deed of Absolute Sale, Special Power of Attorney and Deed of Second Real Estate Mortgage were faked. She quoted Kris as telling her, "No, it's not my signature. It's also not the signature of Ipe."

A check made by Cristina's lawyers of the signatures attached to the agreements made between Ramon and movie producers Monteverde, Tan and Del Rosario showed that the producers' signatures had also been forged. The National Bureau of Investigation also found the signatures had been faked. Appearing in "The Buzz" last Feb. 8, Ramon Salvador admitted, "I did sign, yes, but I did not sign for Robbie." He added that Cristina had the papers in possession for more than a year.

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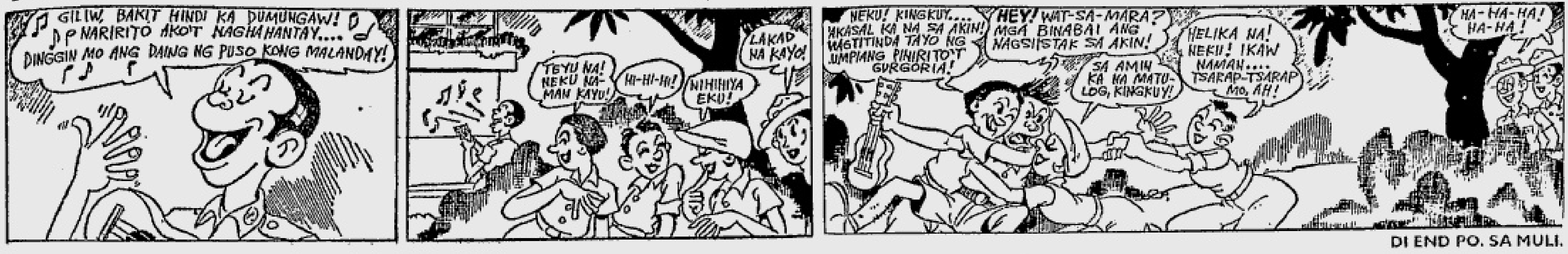
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Unusual love triangle

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

POST-VALENTINE'S Day films on our screens are led by "Something's Gotta Give," a romantic comedy that stars **Jack Nicholson, Diane Keaton** and **Keanu Reeves.**

The movie is an unusual treat because it's about love between mature people. This is supposed to be a dangerous tack to take, because the film audience is generally made up of young people, who can't be expected to relate to a story about mature romance.

But "Something's Gotta Give" is doing well at the box office and is being considered for some awards, so it's obviously succeeded in bending Hollywood's rules.

—And a good thing, too, because mature love needs to be dramatized on the screen as much as the more usual, teen or young adult variety.

Perhaps it's the movie's plot premise that grabs viewers belonging to different age groups: Nicholson is cast as an aging playboy who is fixated on young girlfriends—until he falls for the mother (Keaton) of his current flame!

For good measure, a young doctor (Reeves) also gets smitten by Keaton, so the already different kind of love story becomes an even more unusual love triangle!

For his part, comedy star **Eddie Murphy** also tries something different in his latest starrer, "The Haunted Mansion"—his first horror-comedy outing. In the creepy comic caper, Murphy and his family find themselves trapped in an old house that is inhabited by ghosts of all forms, motives and persuasions.

"Gothika" is similarly chilling, but it isn't interested in being funny. The new suspense-thriller topbills **Halle Berry** as a criminal psychologist who treats dangerously disturbed patients like Chloe (**Penelope Cruz**), a murderess whose confessions of satanic torture Berry dismisses as products of her paranoid mind.

Imagine the psychologist's shock when she discovers that her husband has been murdered—and the bloody evidence points directly at her! Berry's character finds herself having to deal with the irony of being confined to the psychiatric ward, along with the unstable patients she used to treat with methodical detachment.

In time, the doctor's claims of innocence are seen as the start of her deep descent into madness by colleagues like the doctor played by **Robert Downey Jr.**, her sympathetic but skeptical co-worker—who is wrestling with issues of his own.

Finally, and contrastingly, "Torque" is a motorcycle chase film by music video director **Joseph Kahn**, who won the Best Direction award at the 2002 MTV Video Music Awards for **Eminem**'s "Without Me."

"Torque" topbills new star **Martin Henderson**, who plays a biker who is wrongly accused of having murdered the brother of a powerful motorcycle gang leader (**Ice Cube**).

—Let the motorcycle chase begin!

'Biyahe Tayo'

THE SONG and music video of 'Biyahe Tayo!" the travel advocacy campaign of the Department of Tourism, Philippine Convention & Visitors Corp., and Pfizer's Bonamine, will be launched at 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 17 at Filipinas Heritage Library, Nielsen Tower, Makati City.

"Biyahe Tayo!" features 21 musical artists who have donated their time and talent to promote the country's best travel destinations.

'Sinsin'

THE INTERFACE between contemporary art and popular culture is explored in the "Sinsin" exhibit curated by Prof. **Patrick Flores** at the CCP Bulwagang Fernando Amorsolo, from Feb. 17 to Match 14. Call 832-3702.

'Buffy'

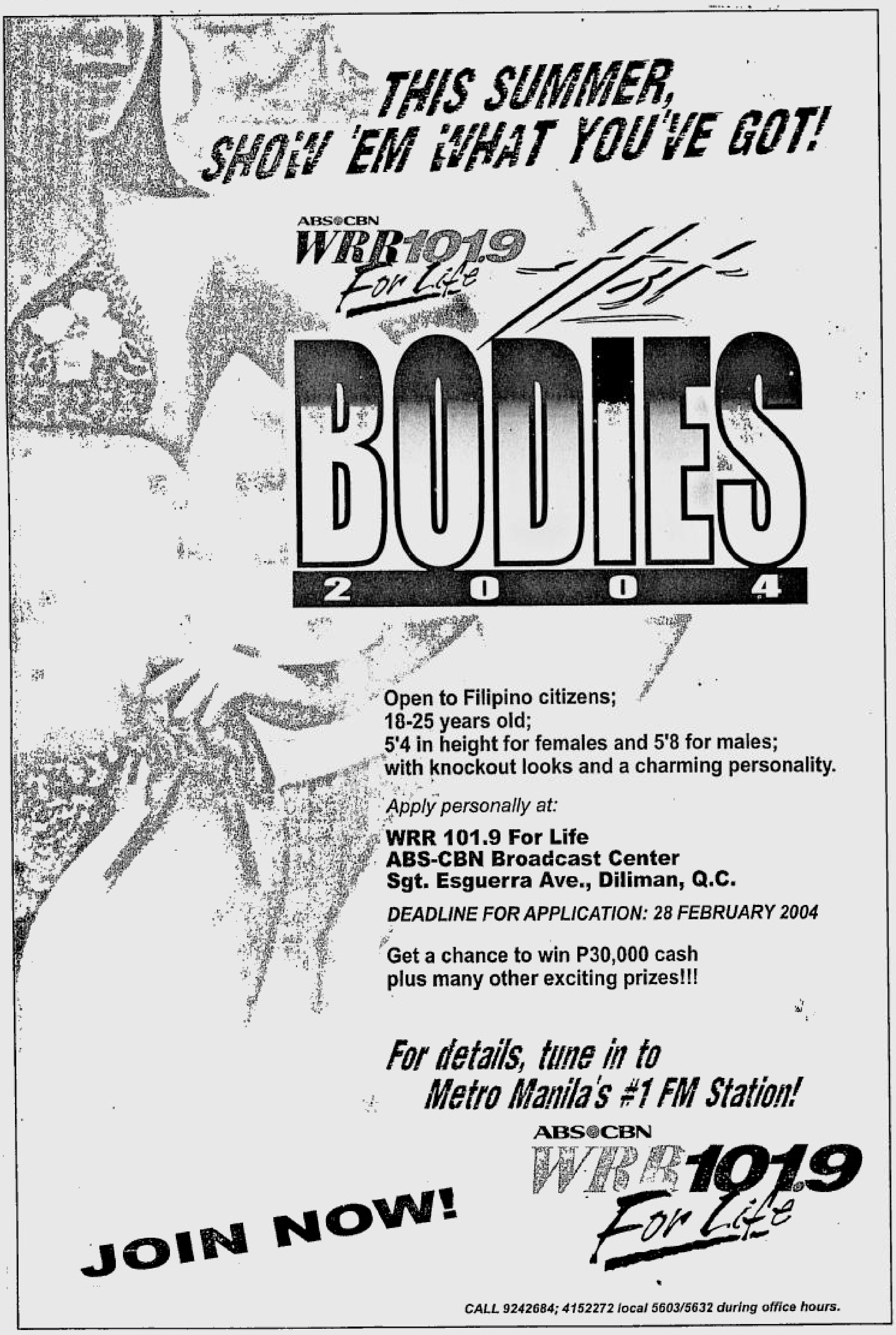
THE SEVENTH season of "Buffy" the Vampire Slayer" is being telecast every Monday at 8 p.m. on Studio 23.

Boy interviews Olive

"PRIVATE Conversations with **Boy Abunda**" features an interview with film director **Olive Lamasan**, whose latest movie, "Milan," is currently showing. The show's Feb. 26 episode features **Jamby Madrigal** and **Eric Valade.**

At Ipanema

IPANEMA Bar and Restaurant at Eastwood City Walk features Strange Fruit, **Anya** and **Jeffrey Hidalgo** on Mondays, Essence with **Kiko Versoza** on Tuesdays, and the K 24/7 quartet with Jazzi and Hourglass on Wednesdays. Call 421-7764.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Reach for the stars at Ayala Cinemas

THE AYALA Cinemas have gone beyond movies, pulling the stars from the silver screen and bringing in the flesh to movie buffs.

Their latest coup had universal heartthrobs Claudine Barretto and Piolo Pascual, stars of Director Olive Lamasan's "Milan," hobnobbing with lucky fans and moviegoers.

As part of "Stargazing" at Ayala Cinemas, Piolo and Claudine visited the Ayala Center Mall to promote "Milan, produced by Star Cinema and shot almost entirely in the cities of Milan and Venice.

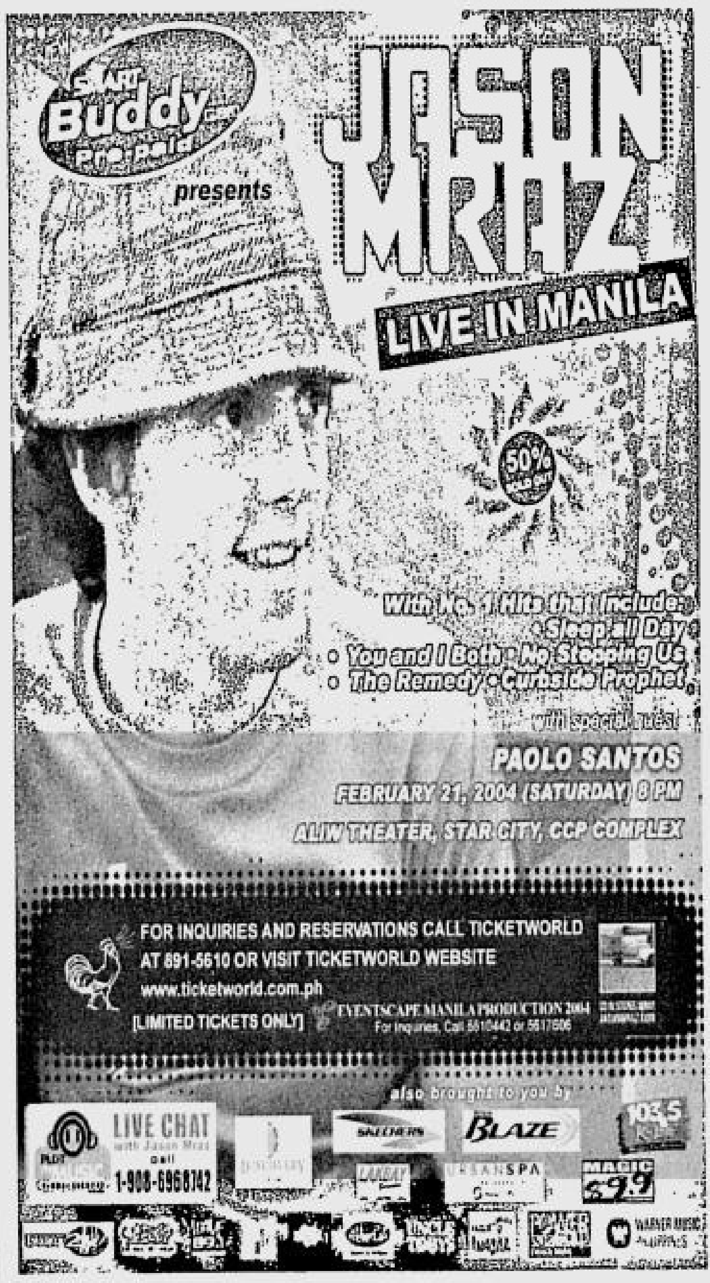
The movie is one of the Filipino films supported by Ayala Cinemas.

Claudine and Piolo rendered a song for their delighted audience and signed autographs for their fans.

CLAUDINE, Piolo reach out to the fans.

"Stargazing" will continue to bring more stars within reach of the audience, raising the bar and breaking boundaries in local entertainment.

"Milan" is now showing at the Ayala Cinemas in Glorietta 1, Glorietta 4, Greenbelt 1, Greenbelt 3, Alabang Town Center and Ayala Center Cebu.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SINGER Anna Fegi

R&B star Luke Mijares

COMPOSER Fr. Manuel Maramba, OSB

CONDUCTOR Gerard Salonga

Month of love, month of arts

By Amadís Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

The Pasig Music Festival, the Bamboo Organ Festival and the Philharmonic in Jeans are just some of the musical events of the National Arts Month

BON FETE de St. Valentine! As the French would say. February is the month of love, with all its hype, but it is also the month of the arts. Specifically, National Arts Month. And there are celebrations and performances from North to South.

In Metro Manila, the festivities are being spearheaded by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), with the latter about to launch the year-long Asya sa CCP 2004 theme festival on Feb. 19.

At Merk's Bar Bistro on Feb. 10, classical music again reared its lovely head with opera and Broadway excerpts from The Three Tenors and One Soprano: Lemuel de la Cruz, Nolyn Cabahug, Ramon Acoymo and the attractive Rachelle Gerodias. Young flutist GJ Herman Gomez and pianist Mary Anne Espina also performed.

The bar-bistro is managed by the popular couple Richard and Ronni Merk.

On Feb. 19, an Arts Congress will be held at the Folk Arts Theater (Tanghalang Francisco Balagtas) during which the presidential candidates will be invited, and asked to present their platforms for art and culture. If any, one might add. Incidentally, the artists' sector has a potential voting power of two million. But how united the sector really is, is another matter altogether.

The 3rd Pasig Summer Music Fest, at the Pasig Museum, started early this year (Feb. 8), with baritone Noel Azona, a member of the acclaimed UST (University of Santo Tomas) Singers, sharing honors with tenor Randy Gilongo and soprano Sharon Vicente, and pianist Najib Ismail.

Succeeding Sundays (5 p.m.) will feature the remarkable young violinist Junior Saraza with pianist J. Greg Suniega and Korean flutist Hae Won Shin with pianist Mary Anne Espina.

UST Guitar Ensemble

SOPRANO Rachelle Gerodias

TENOR Jose Randy Gilongo

The first-ever International Rondalla Festival (Cuerdas nin Kagabsan, Bicol for Strings of Unity) was held in Raul Roco country, Naga City, and Legazpi City Feb. 8-14. But why in Bicol? Because the region is rich in the *rondalla* tradition. Fortunately, the *rondalla* groups will also perform at the CCP on Feb. 17.

The participating groups come from Mexico, US, Spain, Russia, Israel and host Philippines.

The *rondalla* has been in the Philippines for five centuries now, said musicologist Dr. Verne de la Peña in a press conference at Barbara's Restaurant in Intramuros. "But for a long time *napabayaan* (it was neglected) and so we had the more 'chic' and less expensive choirs," he said. "Everybody was trying to come up with a Philippine Madrigal-like group, which would win honors abroad."

Nevertheless, the *rondalla* has always been with us, and now it is experiencing a resurgence here and abroad. "At the end of the 20th century," de la Peña pointed out, "we had the beginnings of a renaissance in the *rondalla*. Our groups here experiment with repertoire and techniques, while those abroad are traditional."

Composer Ramon B. Santos noted that "I have experimented with and explored the different sounds that a *rondalla* can produce. So now we have some very fresh music, new compositions, new sounds, new techniques."

Santos described the *rondalla* as "a national treasure that connects us to the rest of the world. It is a primary emblem of the Filipino national heritage. It is as Filipino as the Barong Tagalog, *adobo* and *embotido*."

Bamboo organ festival

Yet another international fest, the durable International Bamboo Organ Festival—now on its 29th year—will be staged at the Las Piñas church from Feb. 27 to March 5. This is an annual event of the Bamboo Organ Foundation, Inc., with Della Gamboa Besa as executive director.

Except for Belgian tenor Bartolomeus de Kegel, all the performers will be Filipinos. These include the UST Guitar Ensemble, singers Rachelle Gerodias, Randy Gilongo, Janet Aracama, Andrew Fernando and Hajji Alejandro; pianist Nena Villanueva, violinist Oscar Yatco, and composer Fr. Manuel Maramba (who will play his new composition "Improvisations (2004)" on the organ.

Dr. Jennifer Pascual, a New York-based organist who is from Las Piñas, will also perform. Choirs include the Ateneo Chamber Singers and the Las Piñas Boys Choir, directed by organist Armando Salarza.

In a chat with this writer during the media briefing at Mil Novecientos Restaurant, Remedios Circle, Msgr. Allen Aganon, parish priest of the Las Piñas church, said the famous bamboo organ now sounds more mellow. "It can still be used for concerts ("*pwede pa rin para sa* concert") but the sound has to be improved, and it will be totally rehabilitated after the festival," he added. And Filipino manpower will do the job.

Classical talents will dovetail with pop singers in the innovative "The Best of Philharmonic in Jeans" on Feb. 21 at the Philam-Life Theater on UN Avenue. This combination of "orchestra and rock-and-roll" brings to a close the six-month concert series of the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO), led by Rodel Colmenar.

Performers are tenor Nolyn Cabahug, an Aliw Awardee; pop diva Anna Fegi, R&B star Luke Mejares, Jett Pangan of The Dawn, and resident conductor Gerard Salonga.

After Ballet Philippines' "Neo-Filipino," the ballet pendulum swings back to the classical school at Star Theater on Feb. 20, when Lisa Macuja-Elizalde and Osias Barroso celebrate 16 years of dance partnership with the rousing "Don Quixote."

This is going to be a lively and interesting month for the performing arts.

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3. Entries can also be sent to Unilab Consumer Health Office, 4th Floor Boneventure Plaza, Ortigas Ave., San Juan.

4. Monthly draws will be held at the Unilab Consumer Health Office on November 21 and December 19, 2003. Deadline of submission of entries should be on November 18 for the 1st monthly draw and December 16 for the 2nd monthly draw. Prizes in the monthly draws are as follows:

Consumer	P 20,000
Salesclerk	P 10,000

There will be three pairs of winners per area (GMA, North Luzon, South Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao) for each draw. Winners can win only once for each of the monthly draws.

5. A grand draw will be held in Eat Bulaga on March 13, 2004. Deadline of submission of entries for the grand draw should be on February 20, 2004. There will be 1 major prize winner, 2 minor prize winners, and 2 consolation prize winners.

	MAJOR PRIZE	MINOR PRIZE	MINOR PRIZE	CONSOLATION PRIZE
Consumer	FORD EVEREST	P 200,000	P 100,000	racing bike
Salesclerk	P 100,000	P 50,000	P 25,000	P 15,000

Winners of the monthly draws have a chance to win again in the grand draw. Each winner can win only once during the grand draw.

6. All draws will be done in the presence of a BFAD representative. Incomplete, tampered, or unreadable entries will be disqualified. In case of dispute, the decision of the BFAD representative will be deemed final. No further correspondence will be entertained.

7. Winners will be informed thru telegram or registered mail and will be given 60 days to claim their prizes. They must present the notification letter or telegram with (2) valid IDs with photo when claiming their prize.

8. All employees of United Laboratories, Inc., TAPE production staff, Advertising Agency (Jimenez Basic), participating promo agency and their relatives up to the 2nd degree of consanguinity and affinity are disqualified from joining the promo.

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Flamin' fun and energy

By E. G. Porciuncula
Contributor

A QUEST FOR FAME. Helen Gallaza, Mackee Serra, Nicole Santiago, Ralion Alonso, Charlie Barredo, Arnel Carrion, Fil Tariao, Cathee Lee Roslovtsev

JEJUE Esguerra, Ring Antonio, Ariel Reonal, Danielle Barredo, Amparo Sietereales, Angelo Paragoso, Oliver Usison

REP's current production of "Fame," an adaptation of the iconic 1980s hit flick, not only breathes a much-needed youthful coolness to the Philippine stage, it does so with wholesome fun for everyone, and in show-stopping style at that.

In particular, what's hot about this show are the great songs and the fab choreography.

The songs are, in general, much more than simply hip. And the choreography, by dance maestro Jaime del Prado, captures the rawness of the play's subject matter—the talents and triumphs of young artists—with a verve and elegance that will make you want to dance in the theater aisles.

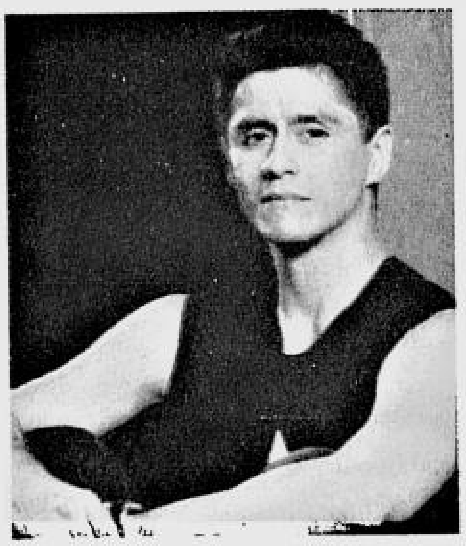
The play's very first song, "Pray That I Make P. A.," sung while the members of the ensemble are waiting to find out if they have been accepted into the Fame School of Performing Arts, will immediately hook you with its delicious, intoxicating concoction of innocence, fear and hope.

Two other songs—"I Want To Make Magic" and "Let's Play A Love Scene"—remind us of that ancient mystery: why being in love, especially for the first time, will always be a magical, memorable time.

Young theater personalities Topper Fabregas and Shiela Valderrama played the lovers. Fabregas performed with Broadway confidence and precision, while Valderrama sang with delightful delicacy. They were amazingly lovely to watch, and we felt like we were really in New York City watching Broadway.

Another notable actor was Angelo Paragoso, who is performing in his first Rep play but is a veteran of European tours of "Miss Saigon" and, yes, "Fame." Playing a nerdy music student, he sings "Bring On Tomorrow" with gentle bravura and charming skill.

One more singing standout is rookie Ring Antonio. She plays a dancer with big hips and big arms and big legs, etc. However, her belter's voice is also big and beautiful and full of promise. She has just one solo number, "Mabel's Prayer," but it's a show-stopper.



DANCE maestro Jaime del Prado

With 'Fame, The Musical,' Repertory Philippines once more gives us a rousing time at the theater

No unnecessary movements

Nevertheless, what truly makes this show rock is the dancing. Del Prado seems to have had the time of his life choreographing "Fame." At all times, you know where to look onstage. Your eyes are never confused, and no movement is unnecessary.

Leading the energetic dancing is Ralion Alonso, TV star and comebacking Rep actor, and Cathee Roslovtsev, an acclaimed Philippine Ballet Theater dancer doing musical theater for the first time.

Alonso plays the passionate black dancer Tyrone, while Roslovtsev essays his more controlled white ballerina girlfriend. Roslovtsev's powerful grace and Alonso's brutally groovy moves lend an unusual fire to their scenes together.

Supporting the lead dancers and singing out their souls commendably are other actors of this ensemble play, who seem to be simply enjoying themselves onstage.

Take note of Danielle Barredo, Amparo Sietereales, Charlie Barredo, Crisel Consunji, Myrene Hernandez, Ariel Reonal, Arnel Carrion, Lorenz Martinez, Ana Abad Santos-Bitong, Oliver Usison, Nicole Santiago, Helen Gallaza and Fil Tariao, himself a graduate of a similar Performance Arts School in Hong Kong and a former member of Ballet Philippines, Powerdance and the Gus Giordano Jazz Company of Chicago.

The musical is, in all respects, superior to the movie. Director Baby Barredo has succeeded in giving us a meaningful and memorable inside look at the bare-bones struggles of emerging artists, as well as another great time at the theater.

"Fame" runs until March 13 in Rep's Globe Theatre at Onstage in Greenbelt 1, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City. Call 8870710, e-mail rep@broline.com or visit www.repertoryphilippines.com

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New dance school opens in Cubao

VIBECA Danskul, a studio set up by Virginia "Gie" Lagula-Bote, a former member of the Bayanihan Dance Company of the Philippines and Pacifica Cultural Dance Company, with Katrina Santos-Mercado, former lead dancer of the Philippine Ballet Theater, opened recently.

The dance school, at the ground floor of the AMO Bldg., 92 New York St., Quezon City, offers classes in classical and modern ballet, jazz, break dance, body conditioning and street grooves.

It will also have special classes in flamenco, Polynesian and other dances soon.

Bote said a teacher and an assistant would handle a class of 15-20.

The school has professionally built dance flooring, air-conditioning, dressing room and waiting area for parents or guardians.

As school director, Mercado said they would use the Australian Conservatoire of Ballet program, which is based on the Russian (Vaganova) Method of Classical Ballet.

Classes for adults will have no age limit. The "Baby Ballet" sessions for kids will accept students from 3-10.

Call 9124283/ 9126781/ 9957441.

Macuja and Barroso celebrate 16 years of dance partnership

LISA Macuja-Elizalde and Osias Barroso celebrate the 16th anniversary of their dance partnership with the full-length ballet "Don Quixote" at Star Theater on Feb. 20-22 and Feb. 27-29.

Dancing the demanding roles of Kitri and Basilio are Ballet Manila soloists Sandra Lynn Huang, Marian Faustino, Jerome Espejo and Gerardo Francisco.

"Osias and I first danced together in Les Sylphides in 1988," Macuja-Elizalde said. "Since then, we have danced some 120 full-length ballets in 40 cities all over the world. In fact, our first performance of 'Don Quixote' together was in Krasnoyarsk, Russia, in 1992."

DANICA Rili, Marian Faustino and Gabrielle Quinto

OSIAS Barroso and Lisa Macuja-Elizalde as Basilio and Kitri in "Don Quixote"

Barroso is ballet master and premiere danseur. Macuja-Elizalde is artistic director.

"Don Quixote" marks Ballet Manila's 10th year. Although named after Miguel de Cervantes' lovable but misdirected knight, the ballet centers around the romance of Kitri, the innkeeper's daughter, and the irascible Basilio, the village barber.

The three-act ballet features some of the most fiery and difficult Spanish-inspired dancing in the classical ballet repertoire. Choreography is by Alexander Gorsky and music by Ludwig Minkus.

Call 4000292, 4043086 or 5255967.

2nd week winners of Dionatext contest

FERDINAND Bajado of Meycauayan, Bulacan, and Gregorio Rodillo of Bangkal, Makati, were chosen as the TextMakata ng Linggo for the second week of the Dionatext Poetry Writing Contest. They will receive P5,000 each.

Consolation prize winners were Roberto Veloso of Parañaque City, Fernando Gonzalez of Las Piñas City, Myreza Catherine Gonzales of Makati City, and Ruby Añonuevo of Pasig City; as well as Enrico Escobar of Cavite City, Rowela Lobaton of Cadiz City, Tyronne Jay Antatico of Cagayan de Oro City and Zhandra Olaivar of Davao City. They will receive P2,000 each.

Dionatext is sponsored by The National Commission for Culture and the Arts in cooperation with the Filipinas Institute of Translation Inc., Unyon ng mga Manunulat sa Pilipinas and the UP Institute of Creative Writing.

The *diona* is a short poem composed of three versified rhyming lines. Each line consists of seven syllables expressing a complete thought. Entries must be written in Filipino and must express love within the family. Contestants must submit their entries through text to: 0927-4641814 or 0918-2252718.

Entries must be accompanied by the name and address of the author. Entries must be received not later than 5 p.m. every Friday of the contest week. Call 9221830.

The winning entries:

Kung aso hinahanap,
'Pag nagtampo't naglayas,
Ikaw pa kaya, anak?
—Ferdinand Bajado

Lolo, 'wag malulungkot,
Ngayong uugud-ugod,
Ako po'y inyong tungkod.
—Gregorio M. Rodillo

2004 NATIONAL ARTS MONTH

This week across the nation

16 Mon

CINEMA PARAISO 2. NCCA Tanghalang Leandro Locsin. Screening of "Memories of Our Love " (1975, VP Pictures) starring Tirso Cruz III and Nora Aunor

KULTURANG PAMANA: Parada, Tula, Awit at Iba Pa, 9 a.m., Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP); Palarong Pilipino, 2 p.m., PUP Main Library.

EKSENA ESKWELA. Intramuros. Up to Feb. 29. An NCR-wide theater festival and competition among high school and college theater groups. Organized by the Araw Theater Ensemble Inc.

DILA-AMBONG II, Pasig City. Poetry cum performance tour by poets of Western Visayas. Organized by the Ilonggo Literature Archive

17 Tues

CINEMA PARAISO 2. NCCA Tanghalang Leandro Locsin. Screening of "Ang Tangi Kong Pag-Ibig" (1954, Sampaguita) starring Rogelio dela Rosa and Carmen Rosales.

SUNGDU-AN 3: National Tour, Cultural Center of the Philippines. Up to Feb. 29. Curator's Forum, 4/F, Cultural Center of the Philippines, 2-5 p.m.; and exhibit opening, 3/F, CCP, 6 p.m. The convergence of local exhibits from NCR, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Organized by Anting-anting Inc.

KULTURANG PAMANA: Parada, Tula, Awit at Iba Pa. Flower Parade, 1 p.m, PUP, Sta. Mesa, Manila.

18 Wed

CINEMA PARAISO 2. NCCA Tanghalang Leandro Locsin. Screening of "Bilanggong Birhen" (1960, Sampaguita) starring Amalia Fuentes and Romeo Vasquez

19 Thurs

CINEMA PARAISO 2. NCCA Tanghalang Leandro Locsin. Screening of "Talusaling" (1955, LVN) starring Nestor de Villa and Nida Blanca. Directed by F. H. Constantino

KULTURANG PAMANA: Parada, Tula, Awit at Iba Pa. Musika ng Lahi, 2:30 p.m., Bulwagang Balagtas, PUP

PASIKAT SA MUÑOZ. 9 a.m., Science City Gym, Muñoz, Nueva Ecija. Palakasan (Patibayang Lakas ng Katawan at Sigla ng Kabataan). Organized by the City Government of the Science City of Muñoz

DILA-AMBONG II, Roxas City. Poetry cum performance tour by poets of Western Visayas.

20 Fri

CINEMA PARAISO 2. NCCA Tanghalang Leandro Locsin. Screening of "Portrait of My Love" (1953, Sampaguita) starring Eddie Gutierrez and Susan Roces. Directed by Luciano B. Carlos

20 Fri

PELIKULA AT LIPUNAN. SM Iloilo. 11 a.m, values-oriented shorts; 1:30 p.m., "Astigmatism" by Jon Red; 4 p.m., "Modernist Visions" by Nick Deocampo; 6:30 p.m., Ilonggo shorts; and 9 p.m., "Scorpio Nights" by Peque Gallaga

KULTURANG PAMANA: Parada, Tula, Awit at Iba Pa. Literaturang Pilipino, 2 p.m,, Bulwagang Balagtas, PUP. Poetry reading.

SINING PINOY 2004 Orchestral Community Concert. Marikina Riverbanks, Marikina City. Up to Feb. 21. Third leg of a series of free community concerts featuring the Metro Manila Community Orchestra. Organized by the Institute for Orchestral Development in the Philippines

PASIKAT SA MUÑOZ. 8 a.m.-5 p.m., City Hall Compound, Muñoz, Nueva Ecija. Pampalasa (Pagkaing Muñoz, Pampayamanang Langhap-Sarap); 7 p.m., Science City Gym, Pasikatan III (Pantanghalang Sining ng Kabataan). Organized by the City Government of the Science City of Muñoz

DILA-AMBONG II, Kalibo City. Poetry cum performance tour by poets of Western Visayas

"PARA WALANG UNYON." Western Mindanao University Gymnasium, Zamboanga City. The NCCA Bulawan award-winning one-act play to be performed by the Association of Creative and Performing Artists of Zamboanga Inc.

21 Sat

SAYAW PINOY. Cebu. Concert of various dance forms. Also a forum tackling the various issues and concerns of the dance sector.

PELIKULA AT LIPUNAN. SM Iloilo. 1 a.m., values-oriented shorts; 1:30 p.m., "Oro, Plata, Mata" by Peque Gallaga; 6:30 p.m., "Frida" by Julie Taymor; 9 p.m., "Dancer in the Dark" by Lars Von Trier

PANDAYAN SA KULINTANGAN. Malaybalay City. Up to Feb. 23. A seminar-workshop on Mindanao traditional music, particularly of the Maranao, the Maguindanao, the Manobo and the Hiligaynon. Organized by the Kariala Ethniko Center for Music Traditions Inc.

"PARA WALANG UNYON." Western Mindanao University Gymnasium, Zamboanga City. The performance of the NCCA Bulawan-winning play

22 Sun

PELIKULA AT LIPUNAN. SM Iloilo. 11 a.m., values-oriented shorts; 1:30 p.m., Ilonggo shorts; 4 p.m., "Abong (Small Home)" by Koji Imaizumi; 6:30 p.m., "Talk to Her" by Pedro Almodovar; 9 p.m., "The Magdalene Sisters" by Peter Mullan

'Brushes with Words and Chords' at UST

THE CENTER for Creative Writing and Studies (CCWS), Conservatory of Music, College of Fine Arts and Design, and Museum of Arts and Sciences of University of Santo Tomas will hold a two-day festival of painting, music and poetry titled "Brushes with Words and Chords."

On Feb. 18, 4 p.m., at the UST Conservatory of Music Conference Hall, there will be a poetry concert.

To read poetic works by Ophelia Dimalanta, Cirilo Bautista, Lourd de Veyra and other writing associates of CCWS are Fr. Rodel Aligan, O.P., Anna Gloria Ward, Ralph Galan, Cynthia Rivera, Dean Jeanette Loanzon, Giovanna Fontanilla, Dean Fortunato Sevilla III, Armando de Jesus, Unesco commissioner Jose David Lapuz, dean Belen Tangco, Evelyn Songco, and Supreme Court Deputy Administrator Justice Zenaida Elepaño.

Between readings are musical interludes to be led by Conservatory of Music dean Raul Sunico.

On Feb. 19, at 3 p.m., the exhibit at the UST Museum, featuring paintings inspired by the poems performed the previous day and as rendered by faculty artists of the College of Fine Arts and Design, will open. To cut the ribbon are UST Museum director Fr. Isidro Abaño and Fine Arts dean Jaime de los Santos.

Both events are open to the public. Call 7313101 loc. 8281.

RAUL Sunico

Bayanihan head is international juror

SUZIE Moya Benitez, executive director of the Bayanihan, was a judge in the 59th Almond Flower Festival and the 49th International Folk Festival in Agrigento, Italy last Feb. 2-8.

SUZIE Moya Benitez

Helena Benitez, founding chair emeritus of Bayanihan, said the invitation was a great honor for the Bayanihan.

The Almond Flower Festival marked the start of spring. Celebrating the flowering of the almond tree, it featured songs and dance, art and folklore, puppets and wandering storytellers, poetry and carts, choirs and torchlight processions.

The festival has become an international folklore competition where people from different parts of the world share their history, culture and traditions. The Bayanihan won the Gold Temple Award in 2002 and the Absolute Gold Award for overall best in dance, music and costume.

Literary caravan tours Mindanao

BALAKI Ko 'Day 2: The Literary Arts Caravan, a project of the Mindanao Creative Writers Group, Inc. with the National Committee on Literary Arts and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts will begin its tour this week with the following schedules:

Feb. 17, 3-5 p.m.—Central Mindanao University, Musuan, Bukidnon; Feb. 18, 10-12 a.m.—Xavier University and Liceo de Cagayan de University; Feb. 25, 10-12 a.m.—La Salle Academy, Iligan City; 3-5 p.m.—MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, Iligan City; and Feb. 27, 3-5 p.m.—Urios College, Butuan City.

Mindanao poets, fictionists and playwrights in Cebuano, Filipino, English will read their works. They include Ametta Suarez Taniguchi, Lina Sagaral Reyes, Raul Moldez, Antonio Reyes Enriquez, Mauro Batausa, Marcelo Geocallo, Gumersindo Rafanan, Ricardo Hynson, Saturnina S. Rodil, Arturo Penaserada, Steven Patrick C. Fernandez, Eduardo P. Ortega, Gardy Ramos Banos, Ramon Jorge S. Sarabosing, Anthony L. Tan and Christine Godinez-Ortega.

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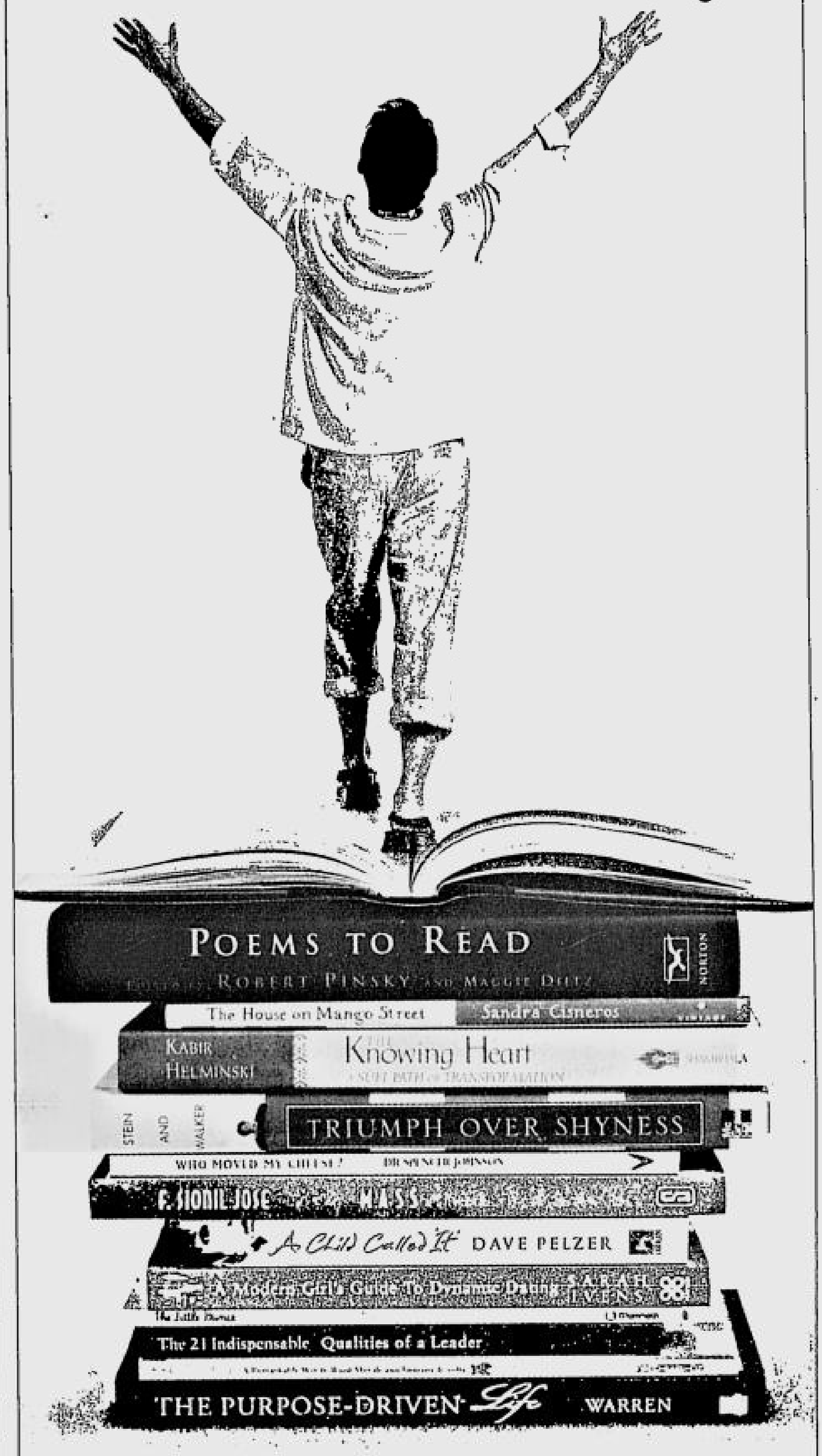

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AmCham supports English language education program

By Butch Hernandez
Contributor

BAMBINA Buenaventura is an education revolutionary. She is a member of Women Always Vigilant for Excellence or WAVE. Last year, WAVE, together with community volunteers, built a new classroom for Pantay Pinugay Elementary School.

Recently Buenaventura, who is also with American Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines (Amcham), got in touch with Foundation for Worldwide People Power (FWWPP) with a very welcome news.

Amcham and Philippine Business Council have signed a memorandum of agreement with Secretary Edilberto de Jesus of Department of Education (DepEd) and Bro. Rolando Dizon of Commission on Higher Education for a six-point English language-proficiency project to help maintain the quality of English in our growing population.

Soon after, the two business associations buckled down to work. Together with Makati Business Club, Sun Microsystems Philippines and DynEd International, they set up a Computerized English Language Center (CELC) at Philippine Normal University (PNU).

DynEd president and founder Lance Knowles conducted a three-day training session on computer-assisted teaching methods and materials developed by his company for 40 participants from PNU, DepEd, private corporations and universities including five foreigners from Malaysia, Singapore and India.

The English-proficiency program uses a mix of classroom teaching and computer-aided instruction. CELC uses teacher-led, computer-based software to teach English. Instruction will naturally be in the school's computer laboratory.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

AT THE PNU CELC MOA signing: (seated) Dr. Nilo Rosas, PNU president; Lance Knowles, DynEd president; Rick Santos, AmCham president; Bill Luz, Makati Business Club; (standing) PNU professor Alice Dioquino, Tom Kral from the US Embassy; Nick Randall from DynEd; John Forbes; and Rob Sears from AmCham

The Philippines is still a prime source of well-trained English-speaking professionals. However, we have begun to lose this competitive edge in recent years.

DepEd's latest diagnostic exams for public schools tend to support this. In those tests, Grade IV pupils had a national average of 42 percent for English. The results were lower, 30 percent for high-school students.

This suggests that the English proficiency of public-school students tends to get worse instead of better as they move from grade school to high school.

The English language-proficiency program will help teachers and students in both formal and nonformal sectors. It will also provide access to a wide range of English-language resources and virtual communities. The program will initially run for three years and set up some 50 CELCs throughout the Philippines.

Going to the barangays

Five colleges of University of Perpetual Help-Rizal (UPHR) are taking an active role in the Education Revolution at the barangay level through the Adopt-a-School program.

Taking their cue from Dr. Lourelei Siy of UPHR Basic Education Division, which adopted Pamplona I Elementary School late last year, the College of Engineering under Asuncion M. Austriaco will be implementing various community-development activities for Manuyo I Elementary School.

The College of Arts and Sciences led by Dean Estrellita T. Muchi has lined up a literacy improvement program for Ilaya ES.

With their reading-skills development program for Vergonville Elementary School, the College of Education under Dr. Consuelo C. Callang is also interested in incorporating FWWPP's Mentoring the Mentors program in its courses.

Mentoring the Mentors national coordinator Evelyn Mejillano has had preliminary talks with Dr. Callang on this.

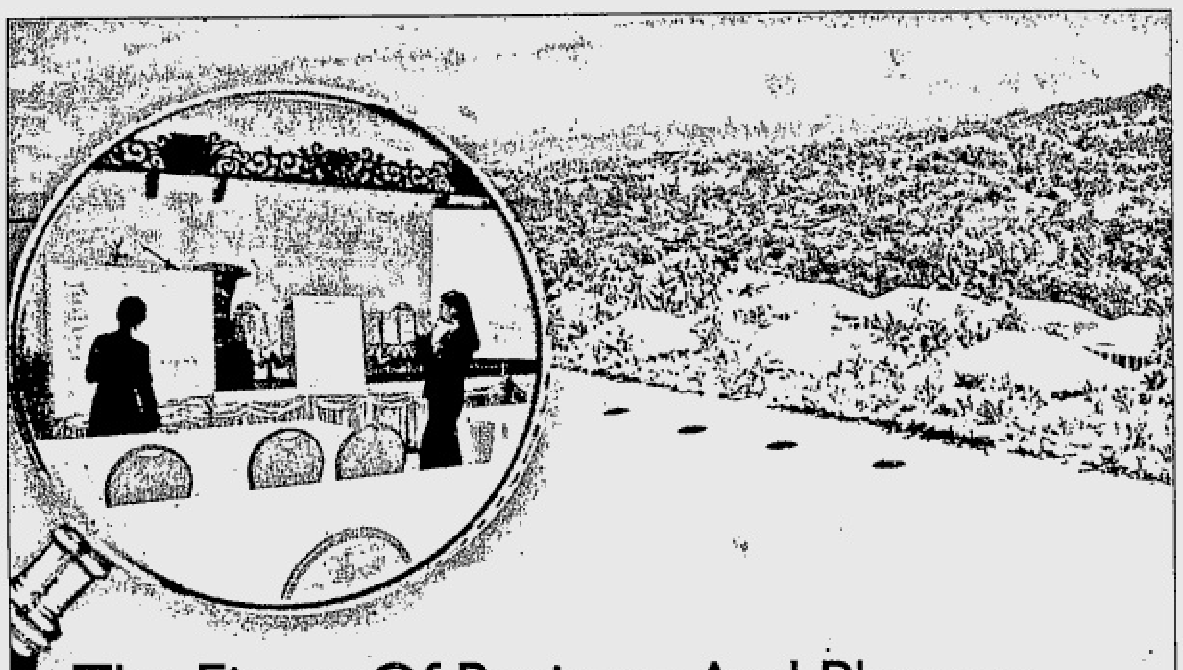
Meanwhile, the College of Criminology under Gen. Yakal Giron and the College of Maritime Education under Capt. Hernando Eusebio have activities geared not just for public schools but for the barangay as well.

The College of Criminology is helping upgrade the crime prevention skills of the barangay *tanod* of Barangay Talon 3.

The College of Maritime Education aims to encourage, through seminars they plan to conduct in public schools, the youth in Barangay Talon 2 to embark on a maritime career.

The author is the executive director of Foundation for Worldwide People Power.

DR. Lourelei Siy (right) of the University of Perpetual Help hands over teaching aids and books to Pamplona I Elementary School teachers.



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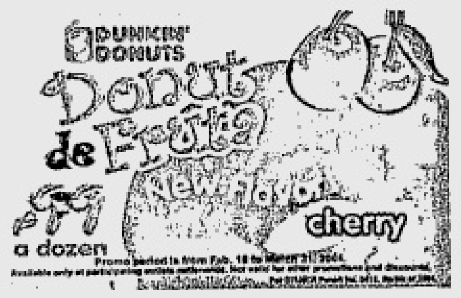
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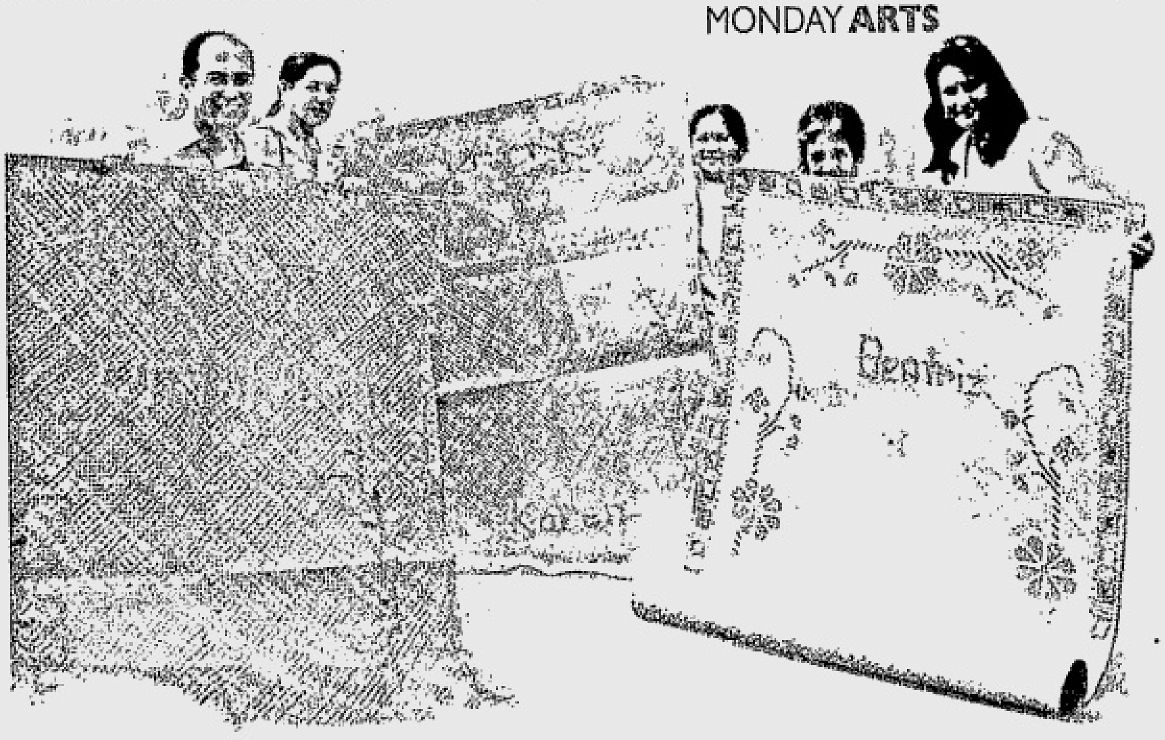
MONDAY ARTS



(TOP) Various *banig* from Mindanao. (Left) Showing off our *banig*, with Norma and Belinda

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Mats of our lives

ALL4ART

Bea Zobel Jr.

ONCE, at the beauty salon I happened to mention that I was going to write an article on the *banig*. You cannot imagine the enthusiastic response! People kept on popping into my cubicle to talk to me! I had a hard time concentrating on my manicure!

Most of the stories involved childhood memories of sleeping on mats, under the watchful gaze of doting parents. Somehow *banigs* truly evoked that security of home. Many people actually expressed delighted surprise that I would be interested in *banigs*.

Ditas Jalbuena recalled how cool the mats were. She theorized *banigs* fell into disfavor when air-conditioners were introduced since something warmer like mattresses were needed. When you think about it, *banigs* also came from an era when domestic space, even in the largest houses, was organized differently.

Today, when we visit homes built in the 19th century, we are often surprised that there were so few bedrooms. I suspect this was because in the past people didn't have separate bedrooms with individual beds. They simply laid out their *banigs* at night and then rolled them up again during the day. There were even special racks for storing them along with blankets and pillows.

Evidently people had different notions of privacy then. Nowadays, the members of affluent families have individual rooms!

Folklorists will tell you that the custom of unrolling *banigs* for the night and then putting them away by morning gave rise to a riddle, which goes something like this:

'Pag umaga ay bumbong,
'Pag gabi ay layun
(By day, a bamboo tube
By night, a deep river)

From that, one can grasp how images of *banigs* are very much intertwined with our culture.

Of course, we are all aware that one of the most memorable short stories by National Artist Francisco Arcellana is titled "The Mats." My friends cannot forget the moment when the father unrolls the mats with the names of his children who have died, indicating that though they are gone they are not forgotten. The story has been issued as a lovely illustrated book.

One of the expressions I find especially sexy is "*babanigan kita ng halik.*" Hmmm, now that's a thought to relish! The English translation is somewhat awkward: " I will cover you with a mat of kisses." But I'm sure you get the picture. (And you should be worried if you don't!)

Interestingly, I can't think of the English term for those squares of foil in which tablets of medicine are embedded. But Filipinos at a drugstore will have no problem. Yes, you guess it—we call them *banig*!

Jewels and colors

Recently a woman who works with me, Lina de la Pasion, visited her mother in Mindanao and came back with *banig*. I was truly amazed when I first unwrapped them. It was like my apartment floor was suddenly paved with jewels! What colors!

A friend of mine, Raul Manzano, kindly offered to send me more mats from the Zamboanga area. I'm so excited to see them! I'm hoping they will include the famous mat from Laminusa, which is among our country's best.

In a recent article, David Baradas describes a whole range of *banig*—from all over the Philippines. He talks about the fabulous mats from Sulu and Tawi-tawi. He also discusses the *banig* of the

MATS/ E4

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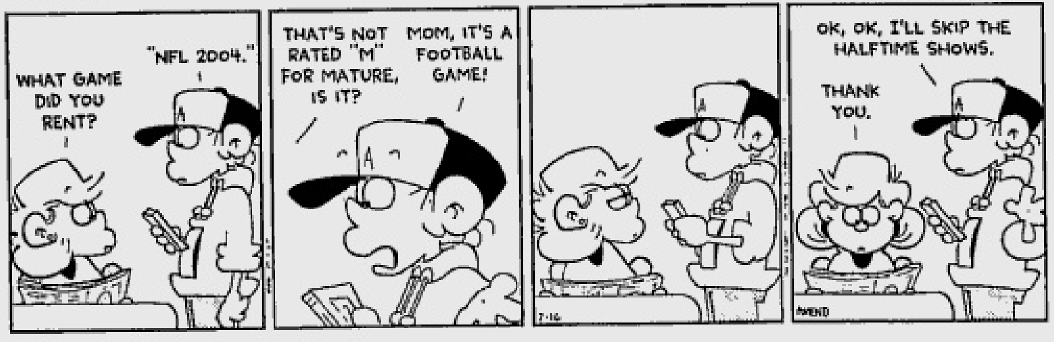
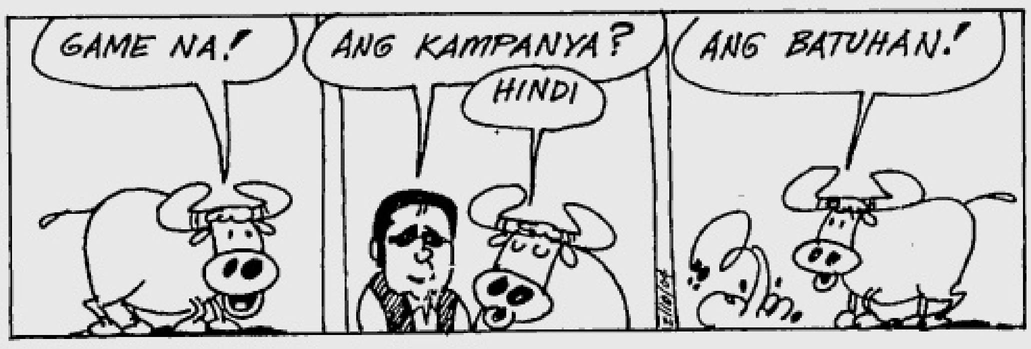
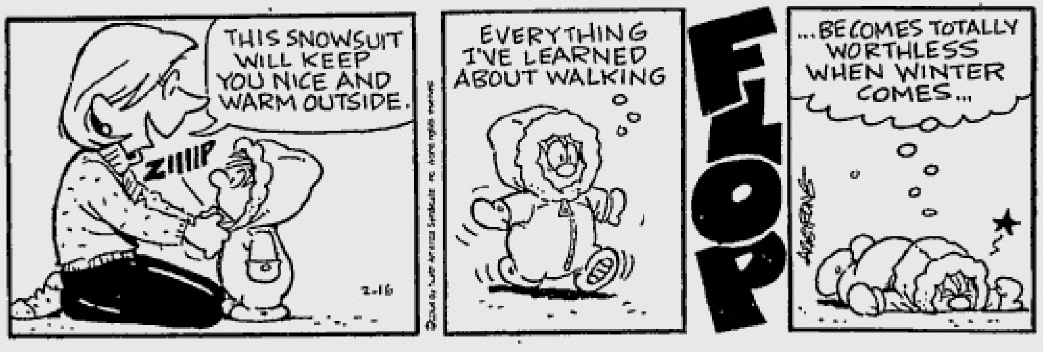
FOXTROT
BY BILL AMEND


WHAT GAME DID YOU RENT?
"NFL 2004."
THAT'S NOT RATED "M" FOR MATURE, IS IT?
MOM, IT'S A FOOTBALL GAME!
OK, OK, I'LL SKIP THE HALFTIME SHOWS.
THANK YOU.
2-16
AMEND

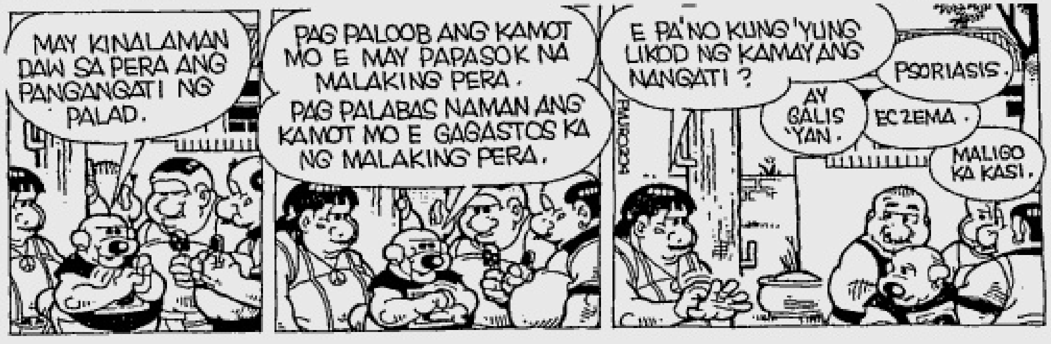
A. LIPIN
BY JESS ABRERA


GAME NA!
ANG KAMPANYA?
HINDI
ANG BATUHAN!

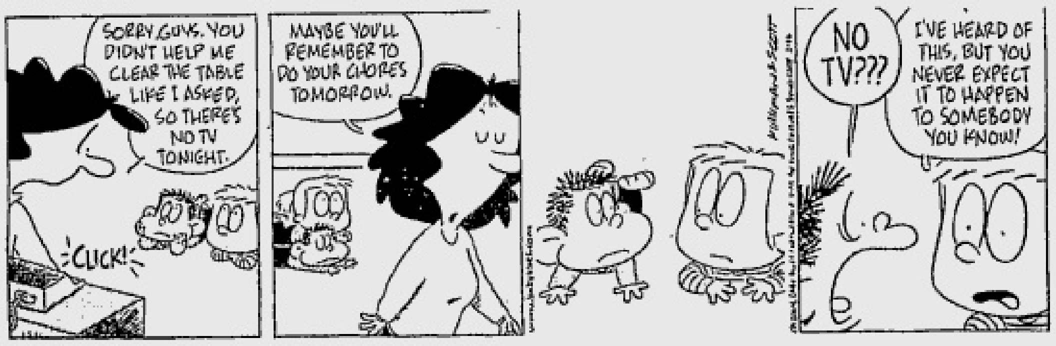
MARVIN
BY TOM ARMSTRONG


THIS SNOWSUIT WILL KEEP YOU NICE AND WARM OUTSIDE.
ZIIIIP
2-16
EVERYTHING I'VE LEARNED ABOUT WALKING
FLOP
...BECOMES TOTALLY WORTHLESS WHEN WINTER COMES...
ARMSTRONG

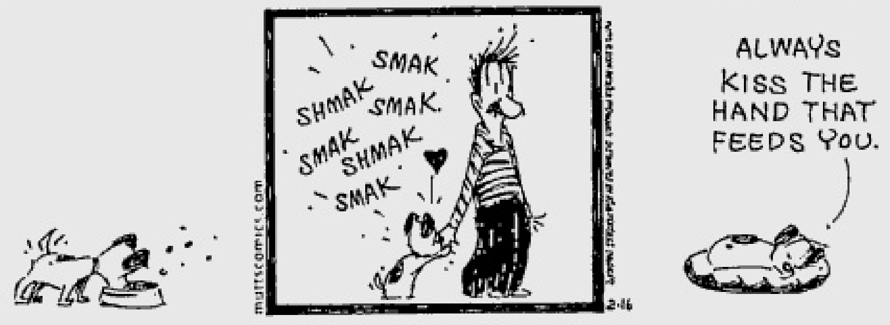
PUGAD BABOY
BY P.M. JUNIOR


MAY KINALAMAN DAW SA PERA ANG PANGANGATI NG PALAD.
PAG PALOOB ANG KAMOT MO E MAY PAPASOK NA MALAKING PERA.
PAG PALABAS NAMAN ANG KAMOT MO E GAGASTOS KA NG MALAKING PERA.
E PA'NO KUNG 'YUNG LIKOD NG KAMAY ANG NANGATI ?
AY GALIS 'YAN.
PSORIASIS.
ECZEMA.
MALIGO KA KASI.

BABY BLUES
BY JERRY SCOTT


SORRY, GUYS. YOU DIDN'T HELP ME CLEAR THE TABLE LIKE I ASKED, SO THERE'S NO TV TONIGHT.
CLICK!
MAYBE YOU'LL REMEMBER TO DO YOUR CHORES TOMORROW.
NO TV???
I'VE HEARD OF THIS, BUT YOU NEVER EXPECT IT TO HAPPEN TO SOMEBODY YOU KNOW!
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

MUTTS
BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SMAK
SHMAK
SMAK.
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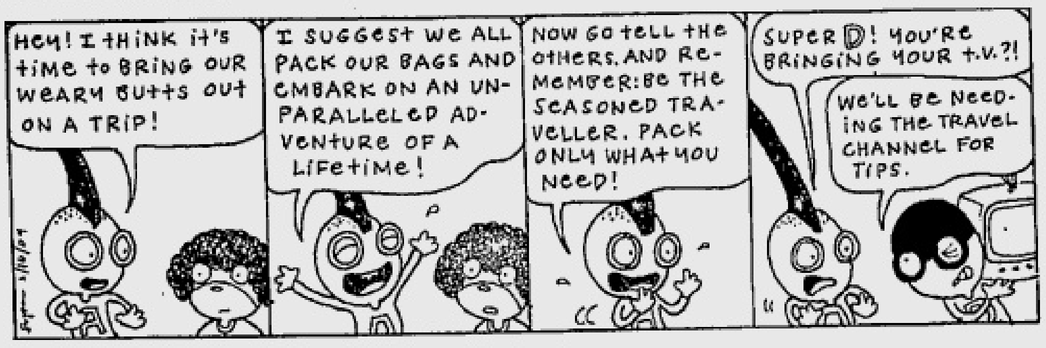
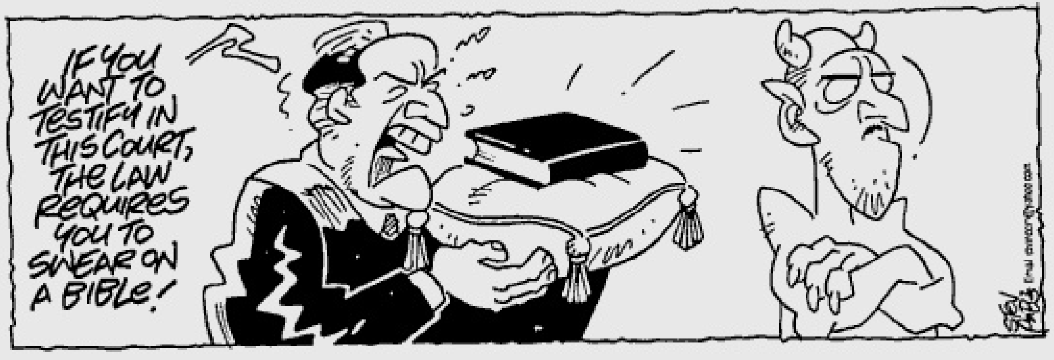
SMAK
muttscomics.com
2-16
ALWAYS KISS THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU.

ATOMO AND WEBOY
BY LYRA GARCELLANO


HEY! I THINK IT'S TIME TO BRING OUR WEARY BUTTS OUT ON A TRIP!
I SUGGEST WE ALL PACK OUR BAGS AND EMBARK ON AN UNPARALLELED ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME!
NOW GO TELL THE OTHERS. AND REMEMBER: BE THE SEASONED TRAVELLER. PACK ONLY WHAT YOU NEED!
SUPER D! YOU'RE BRINGING YOUR T.V.?!
WE'LL BE NEEDING THE TRAVEL CHANNEL FOR TIPS.

DIVINE COMEDY
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


IF YOU WANT TO TESTIFY IN THIS COURT, THE LAW REQUIRES YOU TO SWEAR ON A BIBLE!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're spontaneous, high-spirited and individualistic. People remember you. You love children and animals. You never stay for long in unpleasant circumstances. That's because you are flexible and quick to see a losing situation. The year ahead promises warm relationships and partnerships. New love and marriage will take place for many of you.
Birthdate of: LeVar Burton, actor; Ice-T, actor; James Ingram, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Conversations with VIPs and important people are a bit serious today. You might want to look your best. First impressions count a lot.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): If you start to waver about ambitions you have had recently, don't. Feelings of pessimism are rampant today. Don't succumb to them.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You might feel less inclined to be generous to others today. If you want to put yourself first, then remind yourself that what goes around comes around.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): With the Moon opposite your sign today, you simply have to go more than halfway when talking to others, especially partners and close friends. Just be friendly and patient.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Try to make a good impression on co-workers on the job today. Others might be keeping track of what you do. If so, give them something decent to keep track of!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You're not afraid to accept increased responsibilities for children today. This is noble. Raising children is one of the most important things in the world. (They are our future.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Focus on home, family and domestic situations today. You want to secure things and make sure of something. You're interested in the long haul right now.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): If you are caught up in thinking that your glass is half-empty today, don't worry. Many people feel a bit pessimistic today. This passes quickly.

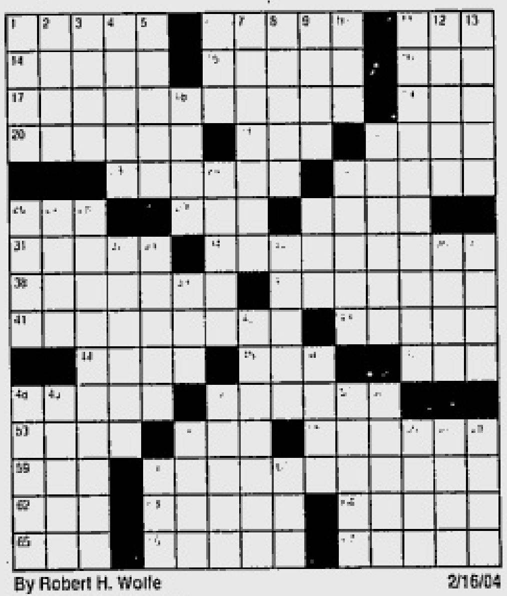
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You want to get the best use of your money today. If you shop, you will buy something that has long-term, practical value. You don't want to spend money on frivolous trivialities right now.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): The Moon is in your sign today! This gives you a slight advantage over all the other signs. It would be wise to take advantage of this if you can.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Feelings of loneliness or being cut off from others are fleeting and temporary. Try to ignore them. Instead, use this day to enjoy your own solitude.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You need more time alone right now. Since your personal year is ending, think about how you are doing at the art of living. Are you satisfied?

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Robert H. Wolfe
North Woodmere, NY
2/16/04

ACROSS
1 Flooded
6 Renaissance poet
11 Adversary
14 Yo-Yo Ma's instrument
15 Much less cordial
16 Quick escape
17 Pioneer's jacket?
19 Rainbow shape
20 Dispatcher
21 Bear's home
22 Hook's mate
23 Brings out
25 "Blue __ Shoes"
26 Horror film street
29 __-o'-shanter
30 Nudge
31 Abrupt transitions
34 Soldiers
38 Name
40 Use a certain conditioner?
41 Early record players
43 Unanimously
44 Makes haste
45 The Racer's Edge
47 Passing craze
48 Repair a hem
50 Early space station
53 Meal scraps
54 Pioneering TV co.
55 Ms. Silverstone
59 Tell's canton
60 Swindling a president?
62 ASPCA part
63 Taken __ (surprised)
64 Actress Verdugo
65 Wapiti
66 Conical condo
67 Breathers

DOWN
1 Dramatic divisions
2 Used to be
3 King or Alda
4 Trombone feature
5 Sank, as a putt
6 Up to, briefly
7 College world
8 Dimensions
9 Spotted
10 Former Bruin Bobby
11 Immune to love interests?
12 Moved the dinghy
13 Awards honcho
18 Very dry, as champagne
22 Poisonous plants
24 Sahara mount
25 "Kama __"
26 Alt.
27 Filmmaker Riefenstahl
28 Injury from fencing?
30 Ling of "Red Corner"
32 Feels sorry for
33 Toss about
35 Spiteful
36 Freeman or Van Duyn
37 Snow ride
39 __ Angeles
42 Sidewise
46 Design
48 Stir into activity
49 Actor Flynn
50 Abandon
51 Infamous Hiss
52 Good Book
54 Hick
56 Pool tools
57 Say it __ so!
58 Cries of discovery
60 Night flyer
61 ETO's leader

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

D	E	S	C	A	R	T	E	S	■	U	N	T	I	L
E	S	C	A	P	A	B	L	E	■	N	O	R	M	A
S	C	A	P	E	G	O	A	T	■	I	D	E	A	S
P	A	L	■	R	E	N	T	S	■	L	U	N	G	E
E	L	L	E	■	S	E	E	■	F	A	L	T	E	R
R	A	I	L	S	■	■	■	K	A	T	E	■	■	■
A	D	O	L	E	S	C	E	N	C	E	■	L	A	D
T	E	N	■	C	L	A	V	I	E	R	■	A	B	E
E	D	S	■	L	O	R	E	T	T	A	L	Y	N	N
■	■	■	D	U	T	Y	■	■	■	L	O	S	E	S
A	B	B	E	S	S	■	S	A	L	■	S	A	G	E
V	A	L	L	I	■	F	A	C	E	S	■	S	A	N
E	R	A	T	O	■	A	P	H	R	O	D	I	T	E
R	E	R	A	N	■	N	O	O	N	T	I	D	E	S
T	R	E	S	S	■	G	R	O	S	S	N	E	S	S

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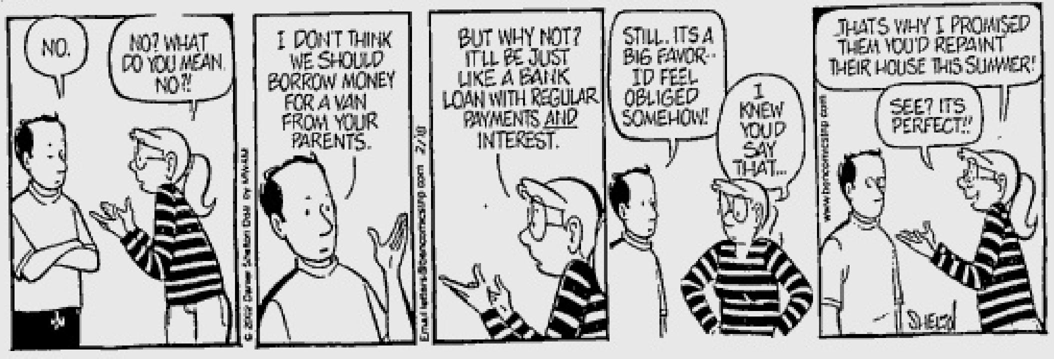
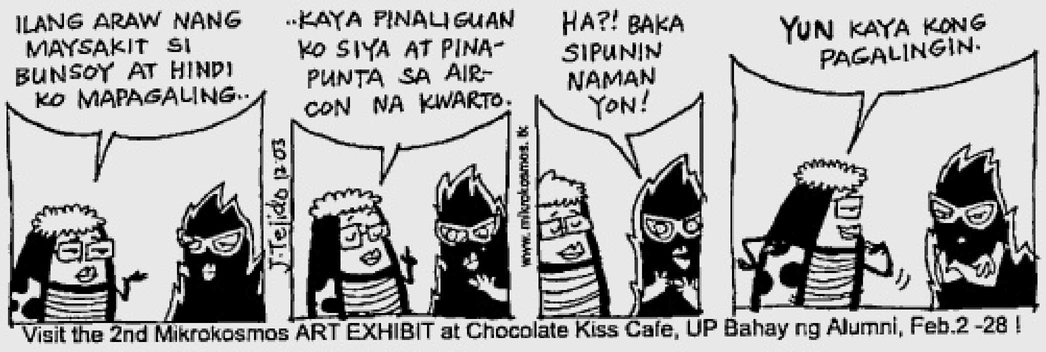
2/16/04

BEN
BY DANIEL SHELTON

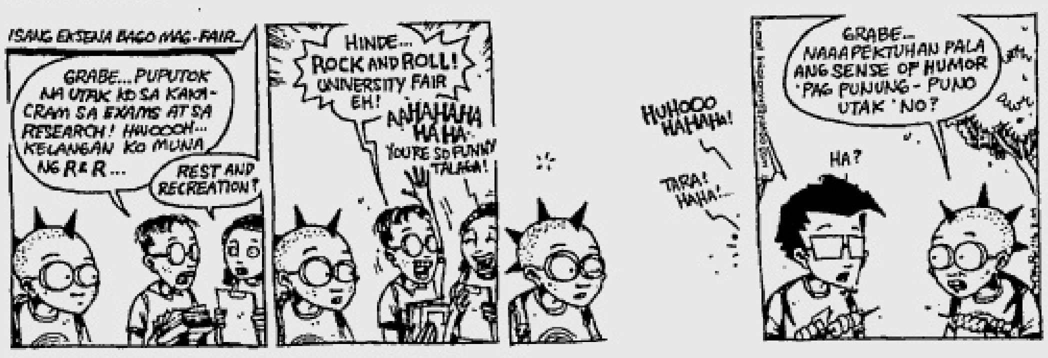

NO.
NO? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NO?!
I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD BORROW MONEY FOR A VAN FROM YOUR PARENTS.
BUT WHY NOT? IT'LL BE JUST LIKE A BANK LOAN WITH REGULAR PAYMENTS AND INTEREST.
STILL, IT'S A BIG FAVOR... I'D FEEL OBLIGED SOMEHOW!
I KNEW YOU'D SAY THAT...
THAT'S WHY I PROMISED THEM YOU'D REPAINT THEIR HOUSE THIS SUMMER!
SEE? IT'S PERFECT!!
SHELTON

MIKROKOSMOS
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

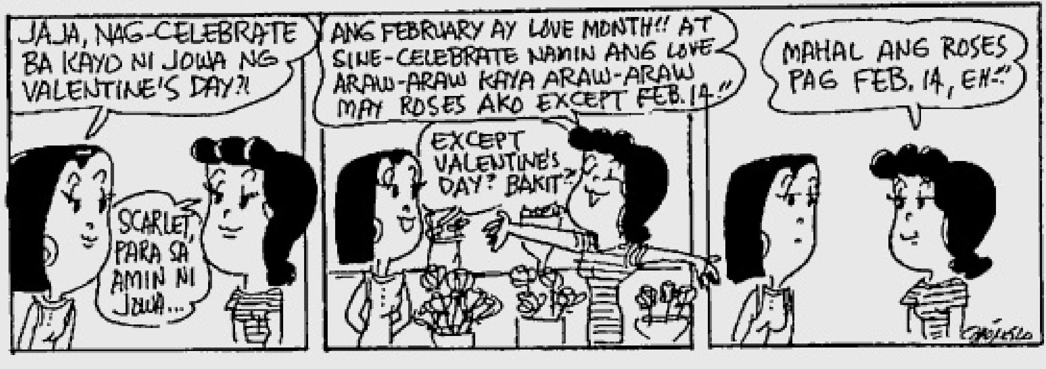

ILANG ARAW NANG MAYSAKIT SI BUNSOY AT HINDI KO MAPAGALING..
..KAYA PINALIGUAN KO SIYA AT PINAPUNTA SA AIR-CON NA KWARTO.
HA?! BAKA SIPUNIN NAMAN YON!
YUN KAYA KONG PAGALINGIN.
J. Tejido 12-03
www.mikrokosmos.tk

Visit the 2nd Mikrokosmos ART EXHIBIT at Chocolate Kiss Cafe, UP Bahay ng Alumni, Feb.2 -28 !

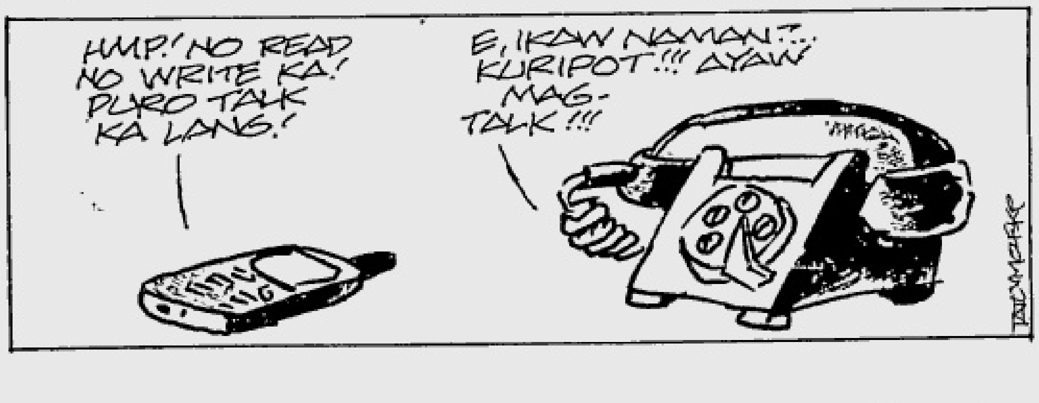
KIKO MACHINE
BY MANIX ABRERA


ISANG EKSENA BAGO MAG-FAIR...
GRABE... PUPUTOK NA UTAK KO SA KAKA-CRAM SA EXAMS AT SA RESEARCH! HAUOOOH... KELANGAN KO MUNA NG R&R...
REST AND RECREATION?
HINDE... ROCK AND ROLL! UNIVERSITY FAIR EH!
AHAHAHAHA HAHA YOU'RE SO FUNNY TALAGA!
HUHOOO HAHAHA!
TARA! HAHA!..
GRABE... NAAAPEKTUHAN PALA ANG SENSE OF HUMOR 'PAG PUNUNG-PUNO UTAK 'NO?
HA?

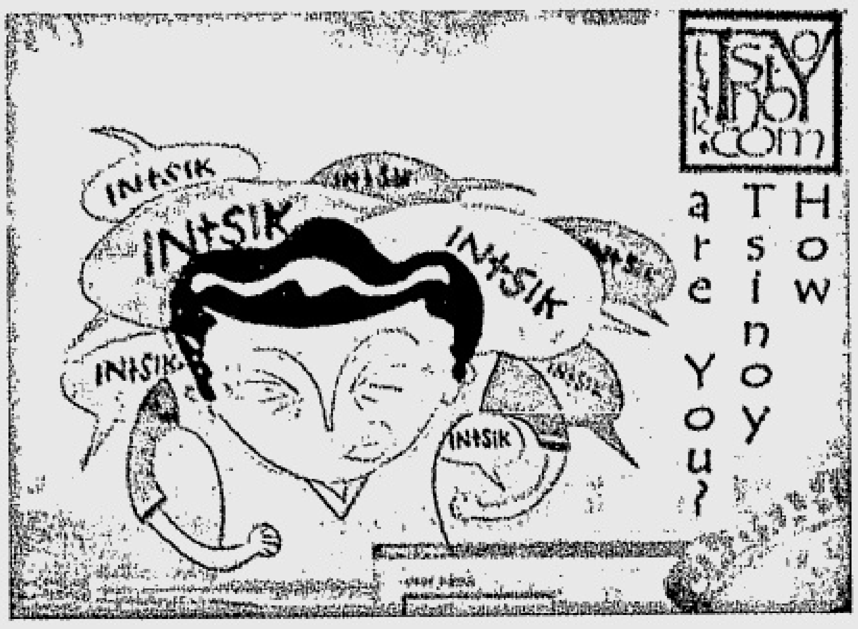
LOVEKNOTS
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JAJA, NAG-CELEBRATE BA KAYO NI JOWA NG VALENTINE'S DAY?!
SCARLET, PARA SA AMIN NI JOWA...
ANG FEBRUARY AY LOVE MONTH!! AT SINE-CELEBRATE NAMIN ANG LOVE ARAW-ARAW KAYA ARAW-ARAW MAY ROSES AKO EXCEPT FEB.14."
EXCEPT VALENTINE'S DAY? BAKIT?
MAHAL ANG ROSES PAG FEB. 14, EH!"
CHIONGLO

TULDOK
BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


HMP! NO READ NO WRITE KA! PURO TALK KA LANG!
E, IKAW NAMAN?... KURIPOT!!! AYAW MAG-TALK!!!

Recommended readings



"INTOLERABLE Cruelty" by F.J. Lauria has recently been adapted into a movie starring Catherine Zeta-Jones and George Clooney; it's about the battle between the sexes gone dirty.

In "Hearts in Atlantis," Stephen King explores the haunting legacy of the Vietnam War.

In "Romancing the Tarot" by Phyllis Vega, the tarot is an intuitive device that can be used for insight into virtually every aspect of life, especially love.

"Uh-Oh: Some Observations from Both Sides of the Refrigerator Door" by Robert Fulghum explores a perspective on the universe and the human condition.

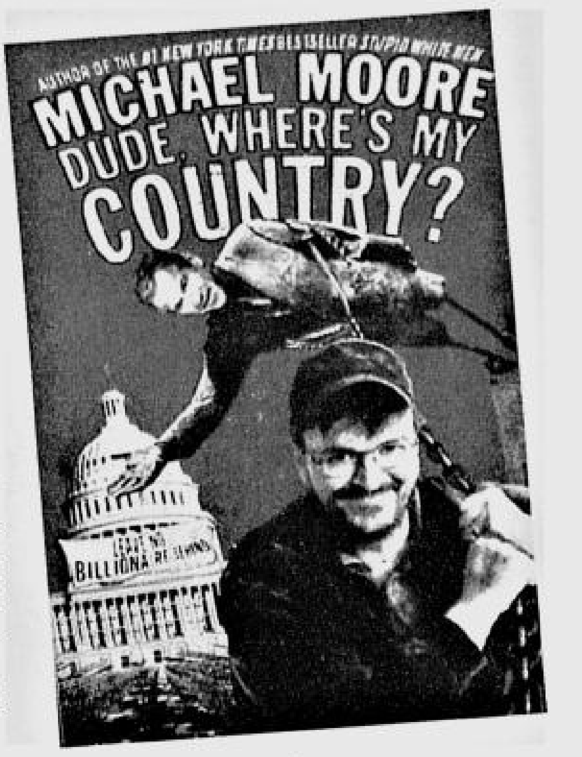
In "The Tao of Pooh," Benjamin Hoff demonstrates the ancient Chinese principles of Taoism.

"How Tsinoy are You?" edited by Janella S. Cacdac and Walter Ang, compiles the best self-descriptions of Tsinoys from all over the world.

"Dude, Where's My Country?" is Michael Moore's blistering follow-up to the smash no. 1 hit "Stupid White Men," the biggest-selling nonfiction book of the year.

"Charlie Chan is Dead" edited by Jessica Hagedorn is an anthology of works by Asian-American writers that are exhilarating in their differences: cultural backgrounds, age range, literary styles, from Jose Garcia Villa's minimalist "Untitled Story," first published in 1933, to Meena Alexander's "Manhattan Music," with its razor-sharp look at the New York art scene of the troubled 1990s.

Call 7576428 to 29, e-mail ibid@powerbooks.com.ph or visit www.powerbooks.com.ph.


AUTHOR OF THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER STUPID WHITE MEN
MICHAEL MOORE
DUDE, WHERE'S MY COUNTRY?

Augustinian writing contest winners bared

WINNERS of the seventh annual search for the best scholarly research on the life and works of St. Augustine sponsored by Colegio San Agustin, Makati will be honored on Feb. 19 in cocktails to be hosted by rector Fr. Horacio Rodriguez, OSA and the school's PTA.

Macario M. Ofilada III, consultant of the Philippiniana Sacra journal of the University of Santo Tomas Ecclesiastical Faculties and a graduate of UST and the Universidad de Salamanca in Spain, won first prize for his "St. Augustine: The Life of the Mind, The Life of Trinitarian Theology." Antonio G. Cumagun, president of the Philippine Advertising Counselors, won the second prize for his book-length effort titled "Sinners and Saints." Freelance writer Philip C. Joves won third for "Augustine: His Life and His Basic World View."

The contest encourages popular interest in the life of St. Augustine (AD 354-430), father and doctor of the Church.

New Tagalog illustrated romance series

FOLLOWING the successful launching of My Special Valentine (MSV) Classics Illustrated, Bookware Publishing Corporation announces the release of its second set of Filipino pocketbooks with exciting artworks.

An innovation in the reading industry, the series is a collaboration of several young romance novelists and portrait artists.

The new titles are: "I Need Your Love" (Kayla Caliente), "Till Then My Love" (Jemilla Jimenez), "Kahit Kaunting Pagtingin" (Audrey Torres), "Follow Your Heart Amor" (Precy Fontanilla), "Matagal Na Kitang Minahal" (Armina Mandia), "Minsan Pa" (Patricia Rodriguez), "Is It Wrong To Love You" (Andrea Guiller), "My Chance To Love" (Rita Navarro), "Ikaw Na Sana" (Bea Bautista), "Kung Muling Magmamahal" (Lira Bellafuentes), "My Heart Never Forgets" (Angelica Tagle) and "You are the One" (Aina de Vera).

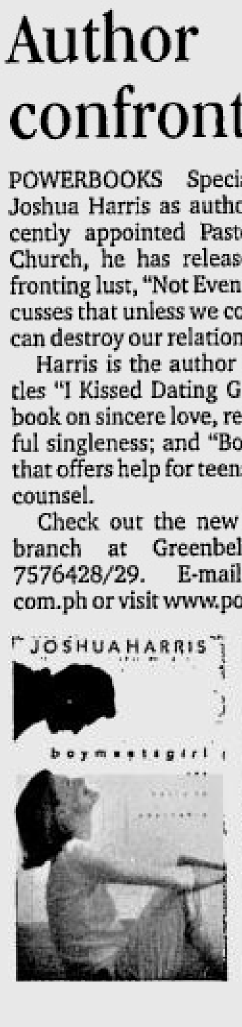
The company's Nokia 3650 raffle promo for readers of the regular label of MSV pocketbooks is ongoing. Call 6318894.

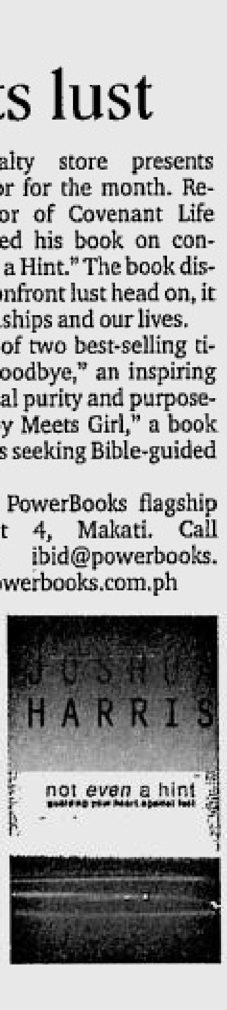
Author confronts lust

POWERBOOKS Specialty store presents Joshua Harris as author for the month. Recently appointed Pastor of Covenant Life Church, he has released his book on confronting lust, "Not Even a Hint." The book discusses that unless we confront lust head on, it can destroy our relationships and our lives.

Harris is the author of two best-selling titles "I Kissed Dating Goodbye," an inspiring book on sincere love, real purity and purposeful singleness; and "Boy Meets Girl," a book that offers help for teens seeking Bible-guided counsel.

Check out the new PowerBooks flagship branch at Greenbelt 4, Makati. Call 7576428/29. E-mail ibid@powerbooks.com.ph or visit www.powerbooks.com.ph





you can win a Boracay trip for 4
plus 1 Million pocket money
to watch the NESTEA Beach Volley 2004 Finals
JOIN THE
NESTEA
Beach Volley
Million Plunge

PROMO MECHANICS:

Prizes:

First Prize : 1 million pesos and a trip for 4 to Boracay to watch the NESTEA Beach Volley 2004 Finals on April 16-18, 2004

Consolation : 10 trips for 4 to Boracay
25 SMART Buddy phonekits

Retail

1. Buy NESTEA at your favorite supermarkets, groceries and sari-sari stores.
2. Each refill pack will have 1 NESTEA Beach Volley Million Plunge sticker.
3. Peel off the sticker to reveal the raffle code.
4. Using any SMART Buddy, SMART Gold, Addict Mobile and Talk 'N Text cellphone, text NESTEA<space>rafflecode<space>name/address and send to 29767 (Ex. NESTEA 1234567 Jimbo Bautista/102 Gamboa St., Legaspi Vill., Makati City).
5. Every text message sent costs P2.50.

Schools

1. Buy NESTEA at your school canteen and cafeterias (with promo materials) and get the NESTEA Beach Volley Million Plunge frequency card.
2. Complete 3 stamps on your frequency cards (1 order of Nestea = 1 stamp) to qualify to join the text-in raffle promo.
3. Scratch the silver portion at the back of the frequency card to reveal the raffle code.
4. Using any SMART Buddy, SMART Gold, Addict Mobile and Talk 'N Text cellphone, text NESTEA<space>raffle code<space>name/address and send to 29767 (Ex. NESTEA 1234567 Jimbo Bautista/102 Gamboa St., Legaspi Vill., Makati City).
5. Every text message sent costs P2.50.

Shakey's Restaurants

1. Each time you order NESTEA together with your favorite meals at Shakey's, you get a scratch card:
   - 1 NESTEA glass = 1 NESTEA Beach Volley Million Plunge scratch card
   - 1 order of Bottomless NESTEA = 2 NESTEA Beach Volley Million Plunge scratch cards
   - 1 order of NESTEA pitcher = 4 NESTEA Beach Volley Million Plunge scratch cards
2. Scratch the silver portion on the card to reveal the raffle code.
3. Using any SMART Buddy, SMART Gold, Addict Mobile and Talk 'N Text cellphone, text NESTEA<space>raffle code<space>name/address and send to 29767 (Ex. NESTEA1234567 Jimbo Bautista/102 Gamboa St., Legaspi Vill., Makati City).
4. Every text message sent costs P2.50.

Participating restaurants in Power Plant Mall, Ayala Malls, Ayala Food Choices, Food Treat at Starmall, Mstar and Metropolis, Dencio's, Cabalen, Bacolod Chicken Inasal, Italianni's, Friday's, Outback and Brothers' Burger

1. For every order of NESTEA at participating restaurants (with promo materials), you can get a scratch card:
   - 1 NESTEA glass = 1 NESTEA Beach Volley Million Plunge scratch card
   - 1 order of Bottomless NESTEA = 2 NESTEA Beach Volley Million Plunge scratch cards
   - 1 order of NESTEA pitcher = 4 NESTEA Beach Volley Million Plunge scratch cards
2. Scratch the silver portion on the card to reveal the raffle code.
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4. Every text message sent costs P2.50.

SMART Buddy (Promo Duration: Feb. 28-March 30, 2004)

1. Buy a SMART Buddy 64K Super SIM 2 for only P199 at any SMART Wireless Centers nationwide and get a NESTEA Beach Volley Million Plunge scratch card for free.
2. Scratch the silver portion on the card to reveal the raffle code.
3. Using a SMART Buddy cellphone, text NESTEA<space>raffle code<space>name/address and send to 29767. (Ex. NESTEA 1234567 Jimbo Bautista/102 Gamboa St., Legazpi Vill., Makati City)
4. Every text message sent costs P2.50.

- Only 1 name can be registered per cellphone number.
- Last day of texting entries will be on March 30, 2004.
- Participants will automatically receive a text message confirming receipt of the raffle entry. Winners will be drawn using electronic raffle draw.
- Draw date is on March 31, 2004, 2 pm at Information Gateway, Inc. office at 1401 West Tower, Philippine Stock Exchange Center, Exchange Road, Ortigas.
- Winners will be notified via phone call from a special number and registered mail.
- A participant can win only once. If a name wins more than once, he gets the bigger prize.
- Winners need to present the registered mail, SMART SIM card together with valid ID and the winning sticker and the NESTEA refill pack or frequency card with 3 NESTEA logo stamps or scratch card to claim their prize at the NESTLÉ office, 31 Plaza Drive Rockwell Center, Makati. For provincial winners, prizes may be claimed at the nearest NESTLÉ office specified in the registered notice.
- If the winner comes from the school category, they must present the winning scratch card with complete and valid NESTEA logo stamps. Only completely stamped and validated scratch cards will be honored.
- Trip to Boracay prizes should be confirmed on or before April 11, 2004. The 1 Million pesos and cellphone prizes may be claimed within 60 days from notification.
- Trips are transferable but not convertible to cash.
- Trips to Boracay are only valid from April 16-18 during the NESTEA Beach Volley 2004 Finals.
- Employees of NESTLÉ Philippines, Publicis Manila, SMART Communications, Inc., Information Gateway, Inc., TOPBEST Printing Corp., Transprint, ZenithOptimedia, Rapp Collins, NEXT, Spike, Ace, Spark, all participating groceries, supermarket, schools, restaurants including their relatives up to the second degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the promotion.
- NESTLÉ PHILIPPINES shall shoulder the 20% tax for prizes exceeding P10,000.00.
- Promo period is from Feb. 1 to March 30, 2004.

Buddy pre-paid
For more info:
Text
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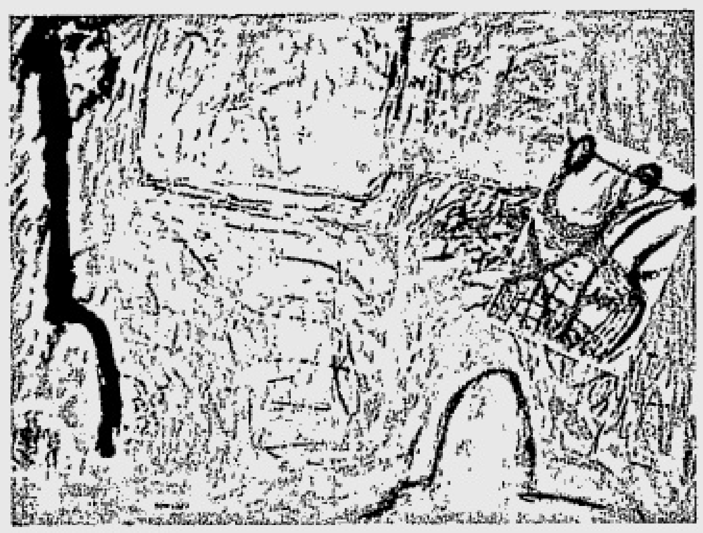
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0073 Series of 2004.

Painting as private theater


"UNTITLED" 6

By Constantino C. Tejero

ART Brut, that pure untrained art derived from or inspired by the works of primitives, small children, prisoners and psychotics, still baffles local gallery-goers although the movement was inaugurated abroad more than half a century ago.

It started in the mid-1940s when Jean Dubuffet began collecting artworks that were "free from cultural norms," mostly those produced by patients in psychiatric hospitals.

A showcase of this kind of art is Rock Drilon's "When You Lose, Don't Lose the Lesson," 10 pieces in mixed media, until today in Galleria Duemila at the Artwalk, 4/L, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

Here is the artist's energy channeled through short strokes and scratches, loops and slashes, drips and doodles, scrawls and scribbles, with acrylic, colored pencil, charcoal, graphite, oil, on canvas or paper.

Scratchy fine lines produce the illusion of craquelure, while the abrupt bold strokes recall the technique of Van Gogh. All hues are used by Drilon, which he applies either in pastel tone or neon.

Most of the pieces border between figural painting and abstraction. Typical of this crossover is "Untitled" 6, where a black ballpoint-pen drawing of a stick figure on a steno-pad sheet is collaged amid the frenetic abstraction of tangerine, lime, red, cobalt, slate.

The viewer can also discern the artist's familiar organic form, particularly in "Untitled" 2-5. This brainlike form, says the artist, is inexplicable, as it just comes out of his being.

"*Mas* defined *dati 'yan—natutusok*, or *nai*-imprison," he says. "Later, *sumasabog siya.*"

This is automatism, as the artist himself affirms: "I look at every piece as a container of strong—*'yung* inside—*na binubuksan ko lang sarili ko*. I just work and work and sometimes the brush and paint don't exist."

Intense drawings

Studying at the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts, Drilon was mentored by National Artist José Joya, a pioneer of Philippine abstraction. He associated with Antonio Daroy, Nestor Vinluan, Lito Carating, Roy Veneracion.

Artists, he says, he always admires include Dubuffet, of course, and German avant-garde sculptor Josef Beuys, graffiti artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, All-over painter Cy Twombly, Bernardo Pacquing, Juan Alcazaren, Roberto Chabet, Gerry Tan, Nilo Ilarde.

"*Lahat sila*, by bits and pieces, *naka*-influence *sa akin*," he says. "*Hindi lang sa* work, *'yung takbo rin ng utak.*"

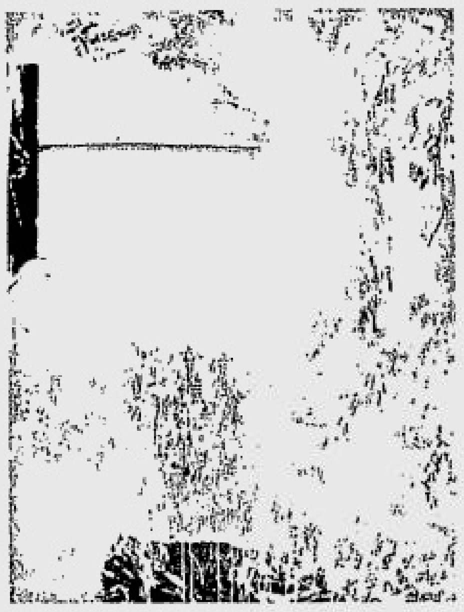
He was a figurative expressionist in the '70s, gaining a reputation with his "Jeepney Series," until he veered toward abstraction in the '80s.

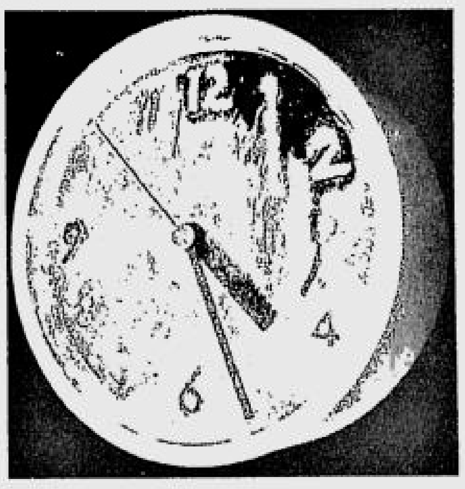
"I used to do very intense drawings," he recalls. "*Sa* first stage, *nababali ang* pencil. I'd step back and reflect on the piece, then return to it, reflect some more—*hanggang pawala nang pawala ang pagka*-graphic *ng* figures."

Shaped canvases

New to his visual idiom is the use of shaped canvases and unconventional formats, as popularized by the Post-Painterly Abstractionists. Is it just whimsy, or does the shape of the canvas really affect the content of the painting?

"I think the experience is different," he replies, meaning, the content may remain the same in any format but the way one looks at it wouldn't be the same if it's contained in a square or an oblong.


"WINDOW"


"CLOCK"

He says the format springs from the content of the piece itself, in the concrete sense of the artwork being the container of the artist's thoughts and emotions.

"Window" has part of its canvas sheared through to form a rectangular opening, thus integrating into the artwork the empty wall behind. "Green Line," with its canvas attached with scraps, takes on the shape of a TV set, cabinet or microwave oven.

The painted object "Clock" is not really new, as Drilon displayed in department stores a collection of it a few years ago.

"I used to think, I wish this painting were protruding, or receding, or going out of the format," he says. "Now it has become a reality."

In any case, the viewer is not encouraged to make any highfalutin interpretations of these works. It's just channeled energy.

This is private domain. You are entering the theater of the subconscious. If you see social implications or theological matters—good for you.

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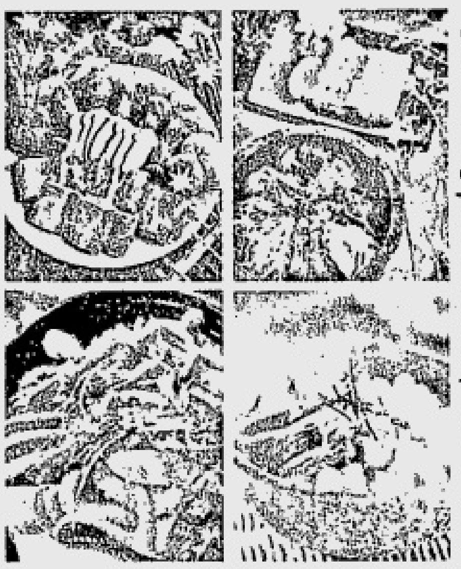
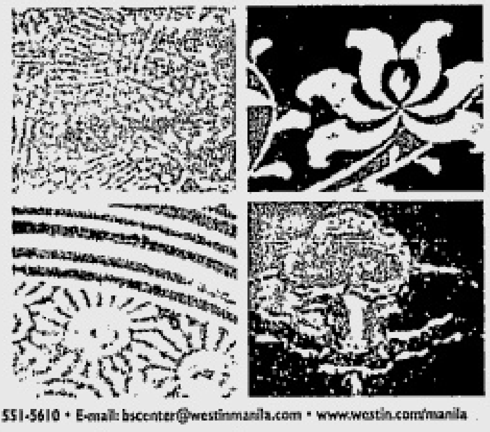




Mats of our lives

From page E1

Visayas: the *bamban* mats of Iloilo, the Romblon mats with their delicate lace-like edges. But most famous of these would be those from the town of Basey in Samar. These come in fantastic floral designs. Sometimes they even featured incredible scenes like views of San Juanico bridge or maps of the Philippines.

I recently had a fun experience with mats.

It started with the alarm going off at 4 a.m. We were heading off to explore the towns on the mystic slopes of the great holy mountain Banahaw. Rubbing my stiff joints, I momentarily questioned my newfound enthusiasm for rediscovering our country.

I like to say that love of country comes from seeing its beauty unfold though our arts and crafts. But believe me, your convictions tend to waver when you have to get up so early!

The day proved worth our interrupted slumber. We saw quaint mountain towns nestled in Banahaw's bosom.

We went shopping for slippers in Liliw. We got to taste *tamales* and *oraro* biscuits, ending with a delicious lunch of *ginataang manok*. This was at Ernest Santiago's delightful café in Pagsanjan. Topping our meal was a delectable *halo-halo!*

Surprise

The best part of our Banahaw trip, though, was our visit to the town of Majayjay in Laguna. Here we saw what scholar Chito Santiago has dubbed the oldest family residential house in the Philippines—dating to the middle of the 18th century! After we made a courtesy call on Mayor Victorino Rodillas, our guide took us to see the mat makers. I got the impression that he was unsure of the exact location.

After asking around, we were ushered into the home of Norma Palatinos. She showed us some mats that she and her friend, Belinda Dublin, had worked on.

When I opened up the first one I saw my name embroidered in bright pink letters. I thought it was a mind-boggling coincidence.

However, when my companion Ollie unfurled another mat emblazoned with "Butch" and "Ollie," we all knew that something was up. Obviously our guide had prearranged everything the week before! Imagine our very own personalized *banig*—bits of Banahaw to take home. What a treat!

One cannot help but admire these splendid mats from Majayjay. They are woven from *pandan* which grows on Banahaw's slopes. We were even shown the huge presses used to flatten the *pandan* strips. These presses were fashioned from huge cylinders of stone.

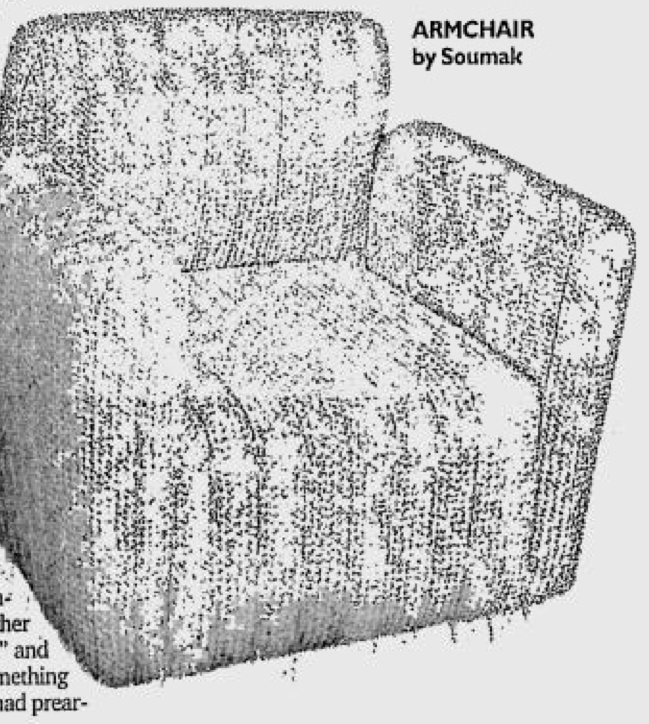
The mats were then decorated with fascinating designs. My mat had a border incorporating shapes that resembled trays, hence the name: *binandejado*. The decorations were done by inserting colored strips of *buli*.

The *banig* can truly enrich our lives. My friend Ollie tells me her son Jamie loves the *banig* she brought home. He lies on it when reading.

It warms my heart to see many designers use mats in innovative ways. I've seen *banig* used as carpets. I've seen *banig*-covered throw pillows and armchairs. I think that these are wonderful ways to get in touch with our culture, with our traditions.

Every time we sink into a *banig* sofa, we are actually returning to a place filled with the skills of expert hands, the memories of home and the riddles of our childhood. Isn't it wonderful to surround ourselves again with our traditional crafts?

For questions and comments, e-mail beartist@filipinaslibrary.org.ph or address letter to Filipinas Heritage Library, Makati Ave., Ayala Triangle, Makati City.


ARMCHAIR
by Soumak

ALASKA

Alaska Milk Corp. Unaudited Net Income Up 14% to P 499M

Alaska Milk Corporation (AMC) reported a net income of P 499 million in 2003, up P60 million or 14% compared to P439 million in 2002.

Revenues reached P4.34 billion, 9% higher than the P3.97 billion in 2002. Higher sales volume across all product lines pushed revenue growth during the year. Liquid canned milk sales volume expanded at nearly double-digit rate, helping to expand market share in the category. In the meantime, the condensed filled milk business continued to enjoy brisk sales.

The Alaska powdered filled milk business likewise maintained its growth momentum notwithstanding the continued contraction of the powdered milk market. The newly launched powdered high calcium milk product likewise contributed to the growth of the total powdered milk business. Meantime, the Alaska Fresh and Alaska Slim in 1-liter UHT packs continued to post double-digit volume growth while newly launched Alaska Crema All-Purpose Cream has been well-received in the market, making additional volume contribution to total UHT sales.

Skimmed milk powder (SMP) prices continued on an upward trend for most of 2003 and peaked at US$1,800 to US$1,900 per MT by the fourth quarter. SMP prices are expected to remain at these high levels at least through the first half of 2004 and compounded with higher foreign exchange cost is anticipated to weigh heavily on AMC's profit margins in 2004.

AMC share price performed strongly in 2003, gaining 47% since the beginning of the year. Share price return is further enhanced by a dividend yield of nearly 10% per annum, with the company's declaration of a P 0.30 / share cash dividend announced during the annual stockholders' meeting in May 2003.

AMC's balance sheet remains very strong , with a cash position of P 1.9 billion as of December 31, 2003.

AMC is one of the leading manufacturers of liquid canned milk, powdered filled milk and UHT ready-to-drink milk products in the Philippines.

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